

‘A Reign of Terror’



CUP Rule in Diyarbekir Province, 1913-1923

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University of Amsterdam, Department of History
Master's thesis 'Holocaust and Genocide Studies'

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Preface

A little less than two decades ago, in my childhood, I became fascinated with violence, whether it was children bullying each other in school, fathers beating up their daughters for sneaking out on a date, or the omnipresent racism that I did not understand at the time. In essence, I was interested in why people hurt each other physically and psychologically. The German occupation of the Netherlands provided much food for thought, so I started reading thick popular books and Dutch war novels in primary school. Later, in my adolescence, this interest became more serious as it crystallized further to include the televised race riots in Los Angeles, the nationalist wars like those in Yugoslavia or Eastern Turkey, the televised Rwandan genocide, and finally, the Holocaust – my first monomaniac fascination. I was absorbed by the black-and-white propaganda movies of thousands of well-dressed Nazis rhythmically marching and saluting through streets draped with hundreds of flags. But this was no over-moralized cliché anti-Nazi statement. On the contrary, my interest was rooted in other emotions: I wanted to be like them, to experience in person that nationalist hysteria, the feeling of belonging to an enormity, the unlimited power, and the occult satisfaction of mass hate. But upon seeing the images of the death camps, the children, the injections, the obscenity of the body count, I realized that something insane was going on. With very strong emotions of righting injustice, I wanted to leap into history to free the victims, break their chains, tear down the barbed wire and end the suffering.

Since I was determined to know more about the evils committed in this period, I kept searching and finding material about the Nazi genocide. I wrote several papers and organized a documentary screening about the shoah, and by the time the topic was finally taught in my third-year history class, I knew more about it than my history teacher, Mr. Henk Wes, whom I would like to thank on this occasion for his inspiring classes and for urging me to pursue my interest further. In this never-ending quest for finding satisfying answers to those disturbing questions haunting me since my childhood, I registered for Sociology at the University of Groningen. With the intellectual equipment of the modern social sciences, genocide didn't seem like an unfathomable mystery anymore. Since the dawn of time human beings have been involved in organizing the mass-murder of their fellow human beings. Along with a growing expertise in genocide studies and a continuous process of redefining ethic frameworks, I became interested in the Armenian Genocide. Not only was this one of the major examples of modern genocide, it was also carried out in the region where I was born (Eastern Turkey). Well before any scholarly exercise I began interviewing the elderly from that region, as will be explained in the introduction. Not only did I realize that the events were very much alive in the collective memories of present local communities, it also became clear that these memories fully contradicted the denialist policies of Turkish state organs. In order to fully commit myself to a more or less thorough study

of an aspect of the genocide, I opted for the one-year MA programme that the Center for Holocaust and Genocide Studies offered at the University of Amsterdam. During this intensive course I experienced a very productive year, culminating in 3 publications and this MA thesis.

Naturally, I owe many people gratitude. First of all, thanks to the CHGS staff for their ceaseless efforts to consort with their parameters as this included educating their students; Ton Zwaan of the University of Amsterdam for guiding me through the process of understanding how human societies and genocides function; the staff at the Zoryan Institute for everything; Osman Aytar of Stockholm University for providing addresses in Istanbul; Ara Sarafian of the Gomidas Institute for everything including chip butty; Mesut Özcan of Kalan Publishing for everything; Samuel Totten of the University of Arkansas for giving me books; Erdal Gezik for his inspiration and hospitality; Canan Seyfeli of Ankara University for sending me certain ciphers; Hilmar Kaiser for intellectual exchanges; Fuat Dündar for re-emphasizing important details of archival research; the staff of the Ottoman archives in Istanbul for their professional help; Jan Bet-Sawoce for his help on Syriac sources; in particular Ahmet Taşğın of Diyarbakır Dicle University for everything; Müfit Yüksel for sharing his erudition; Mark Levene of Southampton University for his help and enthusiasm; Gürdal Aksoy for help with oral history; Şerafettin Kocaman of the Beyazıt Library for help with the *Takvim-i Vekayi* issues; Sabri Atman for introducing me to Syriac society; George Aghjayan for sending me oral histories; Zülfikar Özdoğan of the International Institute for Social History for help with sources; Fatih Özdemir of Middle East Technic University for intellectual exchanges, and Ali Levent Üngör for carrying my suitcase with 46 kilos of books from Turkey to Germany. I specifically thank my good friend Nişan Sarıcan, whose help and support during the writing process was indispensable. Then, I also have to thank the dozens of (partly anonymous) respondents that I interviewed for the sake of oral history material.

Special acknowledgement also goes out to the AUV Fund (University of Amsterdam) and GUF Fund (University of Groningen). With a generous grant each, their financial support facilitated my research greatly.

Above all I would like to thank my supervisors: Prof. Dr. Johannes Houwink ten Cate and Dr. Karel Berkhoff of the Center for Holocaust and Genocide Studies in Amsterdam.

Finally, thank you to my extended family for their endless support and for putting up with me.

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Introduction

This is a study of Ottoman government policies in the province of Diyarbekir from 1913 to 1918. In this period, the Ottoman Empire was under the rule of the then reigning ‘Committee of Union and Progress’ (*İttihat ve Terakki Cemiyeti*). From 1913 on, a small but radical faction within this semi-official political party ordered empire-wide campaigns of ethnic cleansing, involving mass-deportation, forced assimilation, and genocidal destruction of various ethnic communities. Hundreds of Arab, Armenian, Kurdish, Syriac, and other communities suffered losses as a result of these forced relocations and persecutions. Combined with wartime famines due to corruption, failed harvests due to deportations, and the outbreak of contagious diseases, millions of human beings died. The CUP put its policies into practice for the sake of a thorough ethno-religious homogenization of the empire, resulting in the establishment of a Turkish nation-state in 1923. In the first Republican decades, processes of social engineering went on as many CUP potentates remained influential and continued to formulate and implement new nation-building policies in the Turkish Republic.

Although several general studies on these ethnic policies have been written, there are only few case-studies.¹ The wartime history of provinces such as Bitlis, Adana, Mamuret-ul Aziz, or Diyarbekir have been left practically unexplored by historians. This study will analyze the wartime history of Diyarbekir province, which has been selected because of its centrality in the Ottoman Empire. Its administrative, legal, and military importance is illustrated by the fact that it lodged a powerful governorship, a court-martial, and the Second Army. Furthermore, it harboured a broad diversity of ethnic and social groups of whom little is known. Diyarbekir is especially an interesting case because it can provide opportunity for testing the following research questions. As mentioned above, the two main lacunes in the historiography of the First World War of the Ottoman Empire are firstly the local implementation of anti-Christian policies, and secondly the fact that many other communities suffered losses too. These two issues will be addressed for Diyarbekir province: the deportation and destruction of Ottoman Christians, and the deportation and settlement of Ottoman Muslims. It is not widely contested that between 1914 and 1924 Anatolia was more or less cleansed of Ottoman Christians through migration, forced conversion, deportation, and massacres. Throughout time, these events came to be known as ‘the Armenian Genocide’, the planned, coordinated CUP program of systematic destruction of the Ottoman Armenian community.² However, history proves to be more complex as innovating research

¹ Hilmar Kaiser, “‘A Scene from the Inferno’: The Armenians of Erzerum and the Genocide, 1915-1916,” in: Hans-Lukas Kieser & Dominik J. Schaller (eds.), *Der Völkermord an den Armeniern und die Shoah: The Armenian Genocide and the Shoah* (Zürich: Chronos, 2001), pp.129-86; Kevork Y. Suakjian, *Genocide in Trebizond: A Case Study of Armeno-Turkish Relations during the First World War* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1981); Ibrahim Khalil, *Mosul Province: A Study of its Political Development 1908-1922* (unpublished MA thesis, University of Baghdad, 1975).

² For an incomplete bibliography of research on the Armenian Genocide see: Hamo B. Vassilian (ed.), *The Armenian Genocide: A Comprehensive Bibliography and Library Resource Guide* (Glendale, CA: Armenian Reference Books, 1992).

shows that many issues of this human catastrophe remain unaccounted for.³ One of these issues is the relationship between center and periphery during the deportations, in other words, how (in)dependent local civil servants were of the central authorities. A second issue is the fate of other (non-Muslim) minorities. Since this study is on Diyarbekir province, the lesser known experiences of Syriacs and Yezidis will be included. It is known that they were subjected to similar genocidal attacks, but questions remain on how this should be conceptualized. Thirdly, the long history of Kurdish-Armenian relations included periods of coexistence alternated with periods of friction, the large-scale political violence of 1915 being a milestone of friction. Yet, relatively little research has been done on the complex and often ambivalent actions of Kurdish individuals and tribes before, during and after the genocide. The participation of Kurdish tribesmen in the massacring of Christians will also be considered in detail for Diyarbekir. Regarding the second core problem, there is little detailed research on deportations of Kurds. It is unclear whether Kurdish citizens were deported out of wartime necessities to thwart off their potential alliances with Russia, or whether these deportations were premeditated programs of ethnic restructuring and forced assimilation. Then again, this approach needs to reckon with the Balkan migrants that were forced to settle in the eastern provinces, Diyarbekir included. Naturally, all of these questions cannot be answered exhaustingly, but these critical issues may pave the way for new areas of inquiry.

Until recently, scholarly studies on the CUP have expounded on its genesis, organizational structure, cadre, and ideology.⁴ Many aspects of its demographic plans and factual policies towards the Ottoman population, including their consequences for the communities and regions involved, remain obscure. This study aims at filling this gap by attempting to contribute to our empirical understanding of CUP policies in Diyarbekir province. A comprehensive analysis of the period, including a full discussion of the entire scheme of social engineering, is outside the scope of this study, therefore only one province will be at the center of our attention: Diyarbekir. Sporadically we will glance beyond its provincial borders, as this will only be done in cases where the particular can only be explained by the general, i.e. to contextualize Diyarbekir in the bureaucratic fabric of Ottoman society.

Before proceeding into the structure of this thesis, it is first important to point out why it seems necessary to focus on Diyarbekir as a key to understanding the aforementioned problems. Grasping the relationship between center and periphery requires concentrating on a region *per se*. This is significant because the implementation of any policy depended on the balance between the administrative autonomy of governors and mayors on the one hand, and the Interior Ministry on the other. Important topics are the different levels of state involvement in the process, local

³ Norman Naimark, "The Implications of the Study of Mass Killing in the 20th century for Analyzing the Armenian Genocide," paper presented at the conference *Vectors of Violence: War, Revolution, and Genocide*, University of Minnesota (Minneapolis), 27-30 March 2003.

tensions and power structures utilized by the state, the varied position of the local populations to the policies, different forms of resistance and collaboration, and the actual implementation of the process as to who is involved and under what circumstances. This way, an analysis of the meso-level would bridge the gap between the too general macro- and too specific micro-level. Firstly, Diyarbekir was to constitute a hub where deportees were concentrated from all over the vast empire. Secondly, Diyarbekir province harboured a formidable diversity of ethnic and religious communities. Each of these has its (often very traumatic) collective memories and popular narratives about the period thus it seems meaningful to explore these and compare the various experiences.⁵ Since written sources were scarce among the population of Diyarbekir, an appeal for use of oral history will be made. Last but not least, this regional approach is methodologically useful in terms of writing hitherto neglected local history.⁶

This thesis consists of four chapters. The first chapter provides an overview of the political situation in the Ottoman Empire at the eve of the war, in particular the ideas and actions of the CUP *vis-à-vis* their subject nationalities. Its three concepts, crisis, nationalism, and ethnic restructuring will be elaborated as the chapter concentrates on key decisions taken by the CUP, in the period 1910-1914. The chapter will also provide a bird's eye view of Diyarbekir province before the outbreak of the war. Along with brief ethnographic and socio-economic explorations, this will deal with intercommunal relations and with the Turkification of administrative posts by loyal and influential CUP members. Chapter two examines the persecution of the Christians in the province of Diyarbekir. This reconstruction will focus on the fate of the Diyarbekir province Armenians and Syriacs (including the Tur Abdin region), and on passing convoys of deportees. The role of Kurdish tribesmen in the persecution will also be scrutinized. Chapter three takes up the deportations of Kurds to the western provinces and their intended assimilation into the newly formulated Turkish culture. It intends to reflect the situation in Diyarbekir in the aftermath of the war, when the destructions had ebbed down. It will also look into the actions of remaining CUP members and local accomplices, and the implications of the war for Diyarbekir. Chapter four will conclude by summing up the main findings of this study and adding some more general remarks on the context of the events.

The material for this study is based on original documentation from Ottoman, American and European consular, diplomatic, and private archives and memoirs. Ottoman archival material is unquestionably the prime source for any discussion of the deportations.⁷ The Ottoman archives, located in the Sultanahmet district in European Istanbul, are not only one of the richest

⁴ For a bibliography of research on the CUP, see: N. Naim Turfan, *Rise of the Young Turks: Politics, the Military and Ottoman Collapse* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2000), bibliography.

⁵ Michael Kenny, "A Place for Memory: The Interface between Individual and Collective History," in: *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, vol.41, no.3 (1999), pp.420-37.

⁶ Harriet T. Zürndorfer, "From Local History to Cultural History: Reflections on Some Recent Publications," in: *T'oung Pao*, vol.83 (1997), pp.386-424.

⁷ Ara Sarafian, "The Ottoman Archives Debate and the Armenian Genocide," in: *Armenian Forum*, vol.2, no.1 (1999), pp.35-44.

collections of official, archival state documentation in the world, they also permit the historian in her/his research to descend to the provincial level without any shortage of documentation.⁸ However, use of the Ottoman archives also bears certain restrictions, in that the archival material unearthed for the CUP period needs to be treated with reservation and careful assessment. Due to the sectarian and secretive nature of the CUP many decisions and orders were issued orally. This is especially true for compromising situations such as murderous orders. Therefore, it is futile to delve in the Ottoman archives for direct references containing the destruction of an entire group.⁹ For this reason, post-war court-martial records, parliamentary investigations, and memoirs of CUP potentates will supplement state documents. In addition to official documents, a bottom-up perspective will also be utilized. Perpetrator, survivor, or bystander memoirs are very useful in drawing local pictures and furnish details on small cities, villages, neighbourhoods, and families.¹⁰ Oral history fulfills a crucial role in bridging the gap between the historian's fetishism for written documentation and the anthropologist's diversified heuristic program. Even though nine decades have passed since the events, many details remain strikingly vivid in the admittedly fragmented memory base of Eastern Anatolian communities.¹¹ This is particularly valid for (often rural) communities with no written traditions, such as Alevis, Syriacs, or Kurds.¹² Thus, oral history is certainly a legitimate method of obtaining data. Fortunately, a lot of work has already been carried out: there are extensive Armenian oral history collections and survivor testimonies on the genocide.¹³ Other collections, both in Turkey and in Europe, are in the making.¹⁴ The complexity of Ottoman society and relative paucity of detailed, micro-level material regarding our topic requires this multi-dimensional approach.

⁸ Stanford J. Shaw, "Ottoman Archival Materials for the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries: The Archives of Istanbul," in: *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, vol.6 (1975), pp.94-114.

⁹ Vahakn N. Dadrian, "Ottoman Archives and Denial of the Armenian Genocide," in: Richard G. Hovannisian, *The Armenian Genocide: History, Politics, Ethics* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1992), pp.280-310.

¹⁰ The genocide survivor memoir has become a genre in the second half of the twentieth century. Lorne Shirinian, *Survivor Memoirs of the Armenian Genocide* (Reading: Taderon, 1999). For critical notes on survivor memoirs see: Bogdan Musial, "Thesen zum Pogrom in Jedwabne: Kritische Anmerkungen zu der Darstellung 'Nachbarn'," in: *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas*, vol.50, nr.4 (2002), pp.381-411.

¹¹ Leyla Neyzi, "Exploring Memory Through oral history in Turkey," in: Maria Todorova (ed.), *National Identities and National Memories in the Balkans* (London: C. Hurst and Co., 2003), pp.60-76.

¹² For centuries, most correspondence between Kurdish notables was written in Arabic or Ottoman. In the 20th century publications mushroomed in Kurmancî, the most widespread northern Kurdish language. Martin van Bruinessen, "Kurdî: zimanekî bi derd e," in: Mahabab B. Qilori & Nêçîrvan Qilori, *Ferhenga Kurdî-Holendî; Woordenboek Koerdisch-Nederlands* (Amsterdam: Bulaaq, 2002), 14-21. For a remarkable study including Kurdish oral history see: Susan Meiselas, *Kurdistan in the Shadow of History* (New York: Random House, 1997).

¹³ Levon Marashlian, "The Status of Armenian oral history," in: *Society for Armenian Studies Bulletin*, vol.5 (1980), pp.3-7. Donald E. Miller & Lorna Touryan Miller, *Survivors: An oral history of the Armenian Genocide* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993).

¹⁴ In the past decade the History Department of Sabancı University in Turkey initiated a broad and ambitious oral history project: <<http://www.sabanciuniv.edu/sozlutarihi>>. The History Foundation (*Tarih Vakfı*, not to be confused with the semi-official Turkish History Foundation, *Türk Tarih Kurumu*) has completed several projects and continues its oral history activities. *Sözlü Tarih Kılavuzu* (Istanbul: Tarih Vakfı, 1993). The Netherlands Dersim Foundation (*Hollanda Dersim Vakfı*) is currently transcribing hundreds of oral history interviews with elderly Dersimites.

Chapter 1: 'Turkey for the Turks'

1.1 Crises in the Ottoman Empire

From the middle of the nineteenth century on, the Ottoman Empire was vexed by several crises as politicians struggled for the political survival and cultural formation of the decaying empire.¹⁵ The reigning Sultan, Abdulhamid II (1842-1918), struggled with managing the power balance between his government and various oppositional political groups. The Sultan, a pious, intelligent but ruthless leader, became the controversial 34th Sultan of the House of Osman. The core concept during his autocratic rule (1876-1909) was centralization of all domains of Ottoman society: education, taxation, communication, transportation, and other societal areas were thoroughly centralized and improved. Parallel to these developments, the Sultan enforced censorship on the press and organized dozens of tribes into irregular mounted regiments called *Hamidiye* that massacred many Armenian communities in Eastern Anatolia in the 1890s. Grappling with a manifold political crisis, Abdulhamid remained in power and continued his despotic regime in spite of two unsuccessful attempts at his life.¹⁶ As the 20th century set in, the fragmented opposition became more outspoken in its ideas and began exerting critical influence on Ottoman politics.

One of the many oppositional parties in the decades before the First World War was the 'Committee of Union and Progress' (*İttihat ve Terakki Cemiyeti*), founded in 1899 at the Medical Academy in Istanbul. The cadre of the CUP was made up of intellectuals, state officials and young military officers, pushing for installment of the constitution and the convention of parliament. The main force behind the organization was the chief telegraphist of Salonica, Mehmed Talât (1874-1921),¹⁷ who, after 1906, came to lead a major faction within the still secret CUP. Other groups within the CUP were the group around İsmail Enver (1881-1922),¹⁸ a young major in the Third Army Corps. As a result of lobbying and disseminating propaganda among

¹⁵ İlber Ortaylı, *İmparatorluğun en uzun Yüzyılı* (İstanbul: İletişim, 2000), pp.13-32.

¹⁶ François Georjon, *Abdülhamid II: Le sultan calife (1876-1909)* (Paris: Fayard, 2003).

¹⁷ Talât was born in 1874 as the son of a minor Ottoman civil servant. He graduated from Edirne High School, joined the staff of the telegraph company in Edirne, but was arrested in 1893 by the Abdulhamid regime for subversive political activities. After two years imprisonment, he was appointed chief secretary of post in Salonica and rendered important services to the CUP. After the revolution of 1908, he became member of parliament for Edirne, and in 1909, he rose to the rank of Minister of the Interior. He was subsequently appointed Minister of Post and then elected Secretary General of the CUP in 1912, further boosting his power base within the party. In 1914 he yielded to Enver Paşa's pressure to enter the war on the side of Germany and Austria-Hungary. As Minister of the Interior he was responsible for the deportation and persecution of the Ottoman Armenians. In 1917 he became Grand Vizier but resigned on 14 October 1918, two weeks before the Ottoman capitulation. Together with Enver Paşa and Cemal Paşa he fled in a submarine to Germany, where he was murdered in Berlin on 15 March 1921 in an act of revenge by Soghomon Tehlirian, an Armenian hitman. In 1943, his remains were flown over to Turkey and reburied in Istanbul. Tevfik Çavdar, *Talât Paşa: Bir örgüt ustasının yaşam öyküsü* (Ankara: Dost, 1984).

¹⁸ Born on 22 November 1881 in Istanbul, Enver began making a career in the Ottoman army at a young age. In 1908 he was one of the three leaders of the CUP movement that rebelled against Abdulhamid. From 1909-11 he served as military attaché to Berlin and became thoroughly Germanophile. When Italy occupied Libya, Enver organised the Ottoman resistance in Tripoli. 1913 saw Enver lead the bloody *coup d'état*, after which he remained an influential member of the Ottoman government until 1918. In 1914 Enver had become Minister of War and, after purging army officers deemed disloyal to the CUP, conducted secret negotiations with Germany aimed at constructing a military alliance. The calamitous defeat at Sarıkamış on 29 December 1914 severely damaged his charisma, but Enver fought back and with Russia withdrawing from the war in 1917, he pushed the Ottoman forces into Baku in 1918. The arrival of the armistice and the end of the war caused Enver to flee to Germany in a submarine. From there, he left for Central Asia with the aim of uniting the Turkic peoples in a pan-Turanist state. His political fantasies ended when he was killed in the 1921 revolt by the Basmachi against the Bolsheviks on 4 August 1922. Louis A. Springer, "The Romantic Career of Enver Pasha," in: *Asia*, vol.17, no.6 (1917), pp.457-61.

Ottoman citizens, the CUP exerted enough pressure on Abdulhamid for him to proclaim the constitution on 23 April 1908.¹⁹ The re-installment of the constitution and the parliament was by no means the cure for all diseases the Ottoman Empire suffered. On the contrary, one could contend that in many ways it contributed to a deconcentration of power and increased the incapability of the government in dealing with the ensuing crises.

From 1909 on the ailing empire grappled with a severe crisis, comprised of internal and external pressures. Internally, the country was torn due to uprisings of both nationalist and rustic varieties. Between 1904 and 1911, a continuous war raged between the Ottoman army and rebellious Arabs in the remote southeastern province Yemen. The war had a detrimental effect upon Ottoman military morale due to the high death rate among Ottoman soldiers, compared to other fronts.²⁰ An other boiling pot was Albania, that demanded autonomy in 1910 even though its population was predominantly Muslim and nationalism hadn't gained foothold among larger segments of Albanian society.²¹ Kosovo and Montenegro too became scenes of important uprisings between 1910 and 1912.²² The Dersim region with its small but heavily armed Kızılbaş population rose in rebellion in 1911 and 1912.²³ Most of these uprisings were caused by either organized ethnic nationalism or discontent with Ottoman rule, such as taxation and military conscription. The centralizing efforts of respective Ottoman governments in the Balkans did not offer much solace and proved counterproductive. But rebellions initiatives were conceived in the Anatolian provinces as well, where intercommunal friction was prevalent and governmental control weak. Moreover, provincial centers like Van, Bitlis, and Diyarbakir were hotbeds of Armenian and Kurdish separatist nationalism.²⁴ At this juncture, Zionism too started becoming a serious problem for the Ottoman government. Since this form of secular Jewish nationalism was fixated upon establishing settlements and independence in Palestine, it was a harmful ideology for the Ottoman elite.²⁵ It is not difficult to surmise that the effect of these series of internal crises was not beneficial to societal peace.

The external crisis wasn't any milder. First of all, the Ottoman Ministry of Economy had to cope with exorbitant debts: for 1908-1909 the country owed its creditors 11.711.128 Turkish pounds, which dropped to 11.000.004 pounds for 1910-1911, approximately one-thirds of the Ottoman national budget. This kept the empire at the edge of bankruptcy.²⁶ The major Western powers had been encroaching upon Ottoman territory for the sake of imperialist expansion for a long time. Italy occupied Tripolitania in October 1912 and escaped potential repercussions

¹⁹ Aykut Kansu, *The revolution of 1908 in Turkey* (Leiden: Brill, 1997).

²⁰ M. Şakir Ülkütaşır, "Türk Tarih ve Folklorunda Yemen," in: *Ülkü*, vol.2, no.17 (1948), pp.10-12.

²¹ George W. Gawrych, *Ottoman administration and the Albanians: 1908-1913* (unpublished dissertation, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI, 1980).

²² Erik-Jan Zürcher, "Kosovo revisited: Sultan Resad's Macedonian journey of June 1911," in: *Middle Eastern Studies*, vol.35, no.4 (1999), pp.26-39.

²³ M. Kalman, *Belge ve tanıklarıyla Dersim direnişleri* (İstanbul: Nûjen, 1995), pp.99-100.

²⁴ Roderic H. Davison, "The Armenian Crisis, 1912-1914," in: *The American Historical Review* (1947), pp.465-505.

²⁵ Esther Benbassa, "Zionism in the Ottoman Empire at the End of the 19th and the Beginning of the 20th Century," in: *Studies in Zionism*, vol.11, no.2 (1990), pp.127-40.

because of Ottoman military impotence and British rejection of intervention in favour of the Ottomans. CUP efforts of deploying a paramilitary expedition including Enver proved futile; the Italian government even ordered bombings of Gallipoli.²⁷ Bitter and disillusioned, the Ottoman government, lead by Minister of the Interior Kâmil Paşa (1823-1913), turned its back on the European powers and could only organize an ineffective economic boycott when Austria-Hungary officially annexed Bosnia-Hercegovina. The most severe and acute crisis hadn't come forth yet. Emboldened by these exhibitions of Ottoman humiliations, Greece, Bulgaria, Serbia, and Montenegro declared war on the Ottoman Empire in October 1912. The Ottoman armed forces, underpaid and underfed, struggled with their technically obsolete weapons and could not hold long. Completely demoralized, the army retreated to the outskirts of Istanbul and awaited the terms of truce the Balkan countries issued on 3 December 1912.²⁸

Although Edirne, the former capital of the Ottoman Empire, was being besieged and desperately in need of relief, the negotiations of 22 January indicated that the government would surrender this important city to the Bulgarian government.²⁹ The CUP was infuriated and a group of hardliners including Talât,³⁰ Enver, the particularly powerful doctors Bahaeddin Şakir and Nâzım, orator Ömer Naci, militant Yakup Cemil and others embarked on a reckless raid to the 'Sublime Porte' (*Bâb-ı Âlî*), the governmental building. On 23 January 1913 in the afternoon, the building was surrounded and occupied by a dozen armed men. In the ensuing skirmish, three CUP members and many guards were killed as the short-tempered Yakup Cemil shot the Minister of Defense, and Enver walked into a cabinet meeting and boldly demanded the immediate resignation of the cabinet.³¹ The *coup d'état* was a success.

The period 1908-1914³² was characterized by fiery political discussions about religion, modernity, and population politics. In the apocalyptic atmosphere in Istanbul, other political factions like the 'Freedom and Coalition Party' (*Hürriyet ve İtilaf Fırkası*) were pushing for radical changes too. However, of all these different parties, the CUP would emerge victorious owing to Talât's organizational talent combined with Enver's ruthless decisiveness. The country was now on the verge of a new episode in its long and problematic history. The humiliating defeats of the Balkan wars coupled with ethnically organized massacres on all sides³³ did not only mark a new stage in the life-threatening crisis for the Ottoman Empire, that now lost its most profitable and

²⁶ Sina Akşin, *Jön Türkler ve İtilahat ve Terakki* (İstanbul: İmge, 2001, 3rd edition), p.264.

²⁷ Şengül Mete, "Trablusgarp Savaşı ve İtalya'nın Akdeniz'deki Faaliyetleri," in: *Çağdaş Türkiye Tarihi Araştırmaları Dergisi*, vol.3, no.8 (1998), pp.261-92.

²⁸ Edward J. Erickson, *Defeat in detail: the Ottoman Army in the Balkans, 1912-1913* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2003).

²⁹ Aram Andonyan, *Balkan Savaşı* (İstanbul: Aras, 2002, 2nd edition), transl. Zaven Biberyan, p.502.

³⁰ Besides its political importance, Edirne bore a particularly emotional significance for many CUP members such as Talât, who was born and raised in Edirne. According to his wife, the only instance when she saw Talât cry rivers of tears was when his hometown fell. "Eşi Hayriye Hanım Talât Paşayı anlatıyor," in: *Yakın Tarihimiz*, vol.II (1962), p.194. His misery quickly turned into vengefulness when he dragged an ill Enver out of the hospital to encourage him to recapture Edirne. He then personally rushed to the front in a self-sacrificial attempt to fight along the ranks of Ottoman troops but was sent back. Tevfik Çavdar, *Talât Paşa* [n.17], pp.249-51.

³¹ The inside story of the 1913 CUP coup is related in: Galip Vardar, *İtilahat ve Terakki İçinde Dönerler* (İstanbul: Tan, 1960), pp.104-19.

³² For the periodization of the Young Turk period as 1908-1950 see: Erik-Jan Zürcher, *Een geschiedenis van het moderne Turkije* (Nijmegen: Sun, 1995), 113-268.

³³ Justin McCarthy, *Death and exile: the ethnic cleansing of Ottoman Muslims, 1821-1922* (Princeton, N.J.: The Darwin Press, 1995).

fertile provinces. It also struck an emotional chord among many CUP members, of whom many were born and raised in places like Monastir, Salonica, Plovdiv, and other cities. A high-ranking commander of the CUP's paramilitary wing,³⁴ wrote in his memoirs that the humiliations in the Balkans stirred feelings of revenge in Enver Paşa as he raged:

“It is completely unacceptable to forget the valleys and plateaus that were conquered with the blood of our ancestors; to leave the squares, mosques, tombs, bridges, monasteries and castles where Turkish warriors reigned for 400 years, in the hands of the previous inhabitants; to be expelled from Thrace to Anatolia. I am more than willing to dedicate the rest of my life to take revenge on the Bulgarians, the Greeks, and the Macedonians.” Yes, as Enver Paşa spoke these words, he got excited, his face turned red, and lightning struck in his eyes. He truly wanted to avenge the Balkan war and would do anything to accomplish this.³⁵

In a personal letter Enver wrote: “Pour sentir plus amèrement toutes les blessures et se préparer pour une vengeance plus cruelle, je veux que toutes les générations prochaines sentent les hontes que nous portons et se venge plus durément envers nos ennemis”.³⁶ Later he added: “[N]otre haine se fortifie: vengeance, vengeance, vengeance, pas d'autre mot!”³⁷

In the months after the coup, the CUP, wielding power from behind the scenes, would gradually impose a violent dictatorship upon the country. Enver greedily reconquered Edirne, was promoted to general, and became Minister of War. The new cabinet stood under the auspices of Talât, who had become Minister of the Interior. As the CUP kept absorbing political power, it also became more repressive:

To them politics was much more than a game and having seized power they meant to hold on to it. To do so they were willing to use all possible means, so that repression and violence became the order of the day. Nothing was sacred in the pursuit of power and those guilty of dissent must be prepared to pay with their lives.³⁸

Slowly but steadily the political climate in Istanbul depacified to an extent unseen in the Abdulhamid era, with political violence becoming commonplace. These assassinations were carried out by organized gangsters loyal to factions around Talât and especially Enver. Hüseyin Cahit (1875-1957), publisher of *Tanin*, one of the most important newspapers of the period, witnessed one of these political murders as a hitman loyal to Enver Paşa shot an opponent of the CUP in his presence.³⁹ The CUP became the propelling force behind Ottoman state terror. What had started out as a moderate political party pressing for reforms, developed into a vindictive, violent dictatorship, which furthermore became rabidly nationalist.

³⁴ The commander in question was Hüsamettin Ertürk. The CUP's paramilitary wing was called 'Special Organization', whose two-fold task it was to foray across the eastern border, and to carry out ethnic cleansing against Ottoman minorities. Philip H. Stoddard, *The Ottoman government and the Arabs, 1911 to 1918: a preliminary study of the Teşkilât-ı Mahsusa* (unpublished dissertation, Princeton University, 1963).

³⁵ Hüsamettin Ertürk, *İki Devrin Perde Arkası*, Samih N. Tansu (ed.) (İstanbul: Batur, 1964), pp.120-21.

³⁶ Enver to a German friend, 2 April 1913, in: M. Şükrü Hanioglu (ed.), *Kendi Mektuplarında Enver Paşa* (İstanbul: Der, 1989), p.237.

³⁷ Enver to a German friend, 8 May 1913, in: *Ibid.*, p.242.

³⁸ Feroz Ahmad, *The Young Turks: The Committee of Union and Progress in Turkish politics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969), p.163.

³⁹ Hüseyin Cahit Yalçın, *Siyasal Anılar* (İstanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 1976), p.170.

The evolution of nationalism in the Ottoman Empire is a long and complex path through myriad twists of the minds of Ottoman intellectuals and international geopolitics. Since the 19th century, the concept, imported from the French Revolution by authors like Nâmik Kemal (1840-1888), became more and more influential among the new generation educated during the Abdulhamid era.⁴⁰ The majority of politicians in the CUP adopted some form of nationalism as the war drew nearer. Although a full discussion of the ideological debates within the CUP is outside the scope of this study, a brief description of the ideas of influential thinkers and powerful politicians is necessary in order to comprehend the policies that were in effect after 1913.

Since Turkish nationalism was in its incipient phase, the very definition of the nation caused disagreement among Ottoman intellectuals. What was the 'nation' of the Ottoman state? The first coherent attempt at expounding a nationalism was written by Yusuf Akçura (1876-1935), who published an article titled *Three Types of Policy* in 1909.⁴¹ In this pamphlet Akçura pointed out that the impossibility of forging a nation out of the Ottoman minorities precluded the ideology of Ottomanism to be successful. Akçura then targeted Islamism and declared it dead because of the genesis of nationalism among Muslim minorities like Albanians and Kurds. He urged his readers to embrace (pan-) Turkism as their future ideal. According to Akçura, pan-Turkism (Turanism) would prevent Russia from intruding in Eastern Anatolia and would unite all Turkophone ethnic groups in one state 'from Vienna to the Chinese wall'. Although his theories were as clear as crystal for Akçura, others had reservations. In CUP texts the national 'in-group' is often designated as the Ottoman Muslims, alternately called "Muslims" (*İslamlar*) or "Turks" (*Türkler*), and it was the latter category that caused much controversy. There were many slogans containing the term 'Turk', but it was never quite clear who these Turks were.

A good example of this dilemma is a polemic between Halide Edib (Adivar), a feminist nationalist author,⁴² and Mehmed Ziya (Gökalp), party ideologue of the CUP.⁴³ In an article published during the war, Halide Edib pleaded for abandoning the notion of Turanism and concentrating on Anatolia as the homeland of the 'new Turks'.⁴⁴ Gökalp, on the other hand, criticized her for ignoring other Turkish groups and emphasizes cultural nationalism instead of territorial nationalism. Gökalp continued to state that "it becomes clear that our nation consists

⁴⁰ Hamit Bozarslan, "La révolution française et les Jeunes Turcs," in: *Revue de l'Occident Musulman et de la Méditerranée*, no.52-53 (1989), pp.148-62; David Kushner, *The rise of Turkish nationalism, 1876-1908* (London: Cass, 1977).

⁴¹ Yusuf Akçura, *Üç Taz-i Siyaset* (İstanbul: n.p., 1909).

⁴² Halide Edib Adivar (1889-1964) was born in a Sabetayist (Jewish convert) family from Salonica. She emerged to the scene of Turkish politics as a staunch patriot but criticized CUP policies against the minorities. This did not refrain her from directing orphanages in Lebanon where Armenian children were turkified, an integral part of the persecution of the Christians. After 1919 she supported Mustafa Kemal (Atatürk) and became a professor of literature in the Turkish Republic. Muzaffer Uyguner, *Halide Edip Adivar* (İstanbul: Varlık, 1968).

⁴³ Ziya Gökalp (1876-1924) was perhaps the most influential intellectual of the CUP era. He was born in Çermik (Diyarbakir) from a Zaza mother and Turkish father. He studied in Istanbul but was banned back to Diyarbakir because of his support for the constitutional movement. He published countless articles in many journals, founded the CUP branch in Diyarbakir and quickly rose to become a member of the 'Central Committee' (*Merkez-i Umûmi*) of the CUP. After the war he was banned to Malta and began working for the Kemalists in Diyarbakir. Taha Parla, *The social and political thought of Ziya Gökalp 1876-1924* (Leiden: Brill, 1985).

⁴⁴ Halide Edib, "Evimize Bakalım: Türkçülüğün Faaliyet Sahası," in: *Vakit*, 30 June 1918.

of Turkophone Muslims”.⁴⁵ This exchange between Gökâlp and Adıvar symbolizes two trends in CUP nationalism: Anatolian-Turkish nationalism, and Turanist-Turkish nationalism. No matter how intense the debates were between these ideologues, they all agreed on one thing: the new nation was to be made up of Turkish Muslims.

One should not conclude from this brief overview that a uniform interpretation of nationalism existed in the CUP. On the contrary, the sectarian nature of CUP allowed for sub-groups to maintain their differing opinions on the nature and virulence of nationalism.⁴⁶ Although there are indications that certain individuals in the CUP had adopted an intolerant form of Turkish nationalism from 1906 on,⁴⁷ this did not apply to the general current of the CUP:

The Unionists were motivated by a peculiar brand of Ottoman Muslim nationalism, which was to a very high degree reactive. It was defined in a particular and antagonistic relationship between Muslims who had been on the losing side in terms of wealth and power for the best part of a century and Ottoman Christians who had been the winners. The Unionists' ideology was nationalist in the sense that they demanded the establishment of a state of their own: before 1918 they took every step to make the existing Ottoman state the Muslims' own and after 1918 they fought to preserve what remained of that Ottoman Muslim state and to prevent it from being carved up. But the nation for which they demanded this political home was that of the Ottoman Muslims – not that of all of the Ottomans, not only that of the Turks and certainly not that of all the Muslims in the world.⁴⁸

An important aspect of Turkish nationalism was that the CUP began founding local nationalist centers and CUP branches all over the empire. This way they were able to gather regional information and indoctrinate the local notables with Turkish nationalism. Gradually, debate on the identity of the state was no longer the prerogative of a select group of educated intellectuals. On 22 March 1912 a group of Ottoman intellectuals founded the ‘Turkish Hearths’ (*Türk Ocakları*), an organization involved in disseminating Turkish nationalist propaganda among the Ottoman Muslims. Although the organization was intended to operate independently from the CUP, Talât tried to control it by having Ziyâ Gökâlp ‘infiltrate’ the headquarters of the Turkish Hearths. From then on the Hearths’ official journal, ‘Turkish Homeland’ (*Türk Yurdu*), began publishing articles full of nationalist slogans, wishful threats, and military fantasies.⁴⁹ An other organization controlled by the CUP was the ‘Society for National Defense’ (*Müdafaa-ı Milliye Cemiyeti*), a semi-secretive faction of CUP members ready to pledge themselves to commit about any act that would turkify the empire. This organization, lead by Kara Kemal (d. 1926) and closely connected

⁴⁵ Ziyâ Gökâlp, “Türkçülük ve Türkiyecilik,” in: *Yeni Mecmua*, vol.2-51 (4 July 1918), p.482.

⁴⁶ Memoirs of peripheral CUP members reveal that the CUP was comprised of three main factions, corresponding to the omnipotent triumvirate: a Turanist, pro-German group around Enver Paşa, a group of patriotic hardliners around Talât, and a more liberal group around Cemal Paşa. Although a conforming ideology was an important element in the formation of these groups, nepotism and loyalty perhaps were the decisive factors. Falih Rıfkı Atay, *Zeytinadağı* (Istanbul: Bateş, 1981), p.38.

⁴⁷ Answering to the question whether Armenians were allowed to join the CUP, two CUP members wrote in a letter: “Ottoman non-Muslims are allowed to join our party on one condition. Our organization is a purely Turkish one. It will never agree with the enemies of Islam and Turkism.” Dr. Bahaeddin Şakir and Dr. Nâzım to Hayri Efendi, 2 June 1906, in: Yusuf Hikmet Bayur, *Türk İnkılabı Tarihi* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1991), vol.2, part 4, p.115.

⁴⁸ Erik-Jan Zürcher, “Young Turks, Ottoman Muslims and Turkish Nationalists: Identity Politics 1908-1938,” in: Kemal H. Karpat (ed.), *Ottoman Past and Today's Turkey* (Leiden: Brill, 2000), pp.150-79, quote at p.173.

⁴⁹ Füsun Üstel, *İmparatorluktan Ulus-Devlete Türk Milliyetçiliği: Türk Ocakları (1912-1931)* (Istanbul: İletişim, 1997), pp.70-78.

to other CUP organizations launched a campaign of ‘nationalization’ well before the war. Their control of several monopolies such as that on tobacco, sugar, and petrol, allowed them to sell supplies at astronomic prices, bringing forth huge profits – all under the banner of ‘nationalization’ of the economy.⁵⁰ One of the foundations intent upon indoctrinating the Ottoman Muslim youth with nationalism and militarism,⁵¹ was the ‘National Turkish Student Association’ (*Millî Türk Talebe Birliği*). Şükrü Kaya (1883-1959), an inconspicuous but very important CUP insider served in its board of commissioners.⁵² The overlap between all of these new organizations was obvious: they were all ‘national’ (*millî*) in character and would obviate any potential hazard to the national, Turkish renaissance.

Total or near-total power allowed the CUP to extend their dictatorship to the Ottoman provinces. They sought to accomplish this by the appointment of trusted party loyalists as mayors and governors. Though many of these organizational structures were unofficial,⁵³ some individuals were openly appointed governor (*vali*) or delegate (*murabba*). They were employed for the sake of collecting local information and putting the CUP ideology into practice. Examples of wartime CUP governors were Rahmi Bey (İzmir), Cemal Azmi (Trabzon), Ahmed Muammer (Sivas), Hasan Tahsin (Erzurum), Cevdet Bey (Van), Sabit Bey (Mamuret-ül Aziz), Mustafa Abdülhalik (Bitlis), Ali Münif (Cebel-i Lübnan), and the for this study relevant Dr. Mehmed Reşid (Diyarbakir). In the army too, purges were carried out by Enver Paşa, who single handedly sought to rejuvenate the corps but in the process also dismissed ostensibly disloyal elements, and employed military staff with CUP affinities. The CUP also began developing its connections with influential urban Muslim elites in provincial capitals and smaller cities. Opportunistic Kurdish notables in Bitlis⁵⁴ and chieftains of the Balaban tribe in Erzincan⁵⁵ seeking to settle scores with rival tribes began collaborating with local CUP henchmen. In exchange for pledging wartime loyalty they would receive logistic support and material compensation.⁵⁶ The principal aim of this entire undertaking was to gradually gain control over the various populations of eastern Turkey in order to implement plans of ethnic restructuring of the Ottoman Empire.

⁵⁰ Nâzım H. Polat, *Müdafaa-ı Milliye Cemiyeti* (Ankara: Kültür Bakanlığı Yayınları, 1991).

⁵¹ Zafer Toprak, “İttihat ve Terakki’nin paramiliter gençlik örgütleri,” in: *Boğaziçi Üniversitesi Dergisi*, vol.7 (1979), pp.95-113.

⁵² M. Çağatay Okutan, *Millî Türk Talebe Birliği (MTTB) 1916-1980* (İstanbul: İstanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi Yayınları, 2004).

⁵³ These covert structures were mostly acquaintanceships and familial relationships such as Talât’s personal friendship with Kara Kemal, but also Enver’s brother-in-lawship with Cevdet, governor of Van. Though many CUP members were non-Sabetayists, some were related to each other through several large extended families of Sabetayist descent from Salonica (16th-century Sephardic converts), such as the Kapancı, Yakubi, and Karakaş families. Together, these networks formed the social basis of the CUP elite. Elie Kedourie, “Young Turks, Freemasons and Jews,” in: *Middle Eastern Studies*, vol.7, no.1 (1971), pp.89-104.

⁵⁴ *Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi* (Ottoman Archives Istanbul, hereafter cited as BOA), DH.KMS 19/27, Talât to Bitlis and Van, 4 April 1914.

⁵⁵ Vatan Özgül, “İttihat ve Terakki ve Balaban Aşireti: Bazı Belgeler Işığında İttihatçıların Aşiret Çalışmaları,” in: *Toplumsal Tarih*, vol.16, no.96 (2001), pp.38-42.

1.2 ‘Nationalization’ of the population

It is not precisely clear when the CUP planned to engage in an all-out, full-frontal campaign of ‘nationalization’, i.e. Turkification of the Ottoman Empire. Nonetheless, it is possible to reconstruct some of the key processes and decisions that may very likely have lead to shaping wartime policies. Three parallel developments were in effect during the years before the war. First, an ethno-religious polarization at the highest political level impelled the CUP leadership to steer away from political pluralism: according to them, only their vision was an acceptable model for the Ottoman Empire. Convinced that the country could only be saved by forcefully transforming it into a ethnically homogenous state with an ethnically homogenous population, it took several key decisions. Second, detailed ethnographic research on almost all non-Turkish Ottoman peoples was to facilitate these plans of ethnic restructuring. Third, the CUP initiated a policy of implementing several trial balloons aiming at Turkification of many domains of Ottoman society.

It was no surprise that the huge losses of the Balkan wars, the ensuing establishment of nation states by formerly Ottoman subjects, and the persecution of Ottoman Muslims in those regions, confirmed suspicions in the CUP that non-Turkish Ottomans could not be trusted. The conclusions the CUP drew from its analysis of the political predicament of the Ottoman minorities quickly turned very hostile. In the tense ambience of the Ottoman parliament, the various (Turkish, Greek, Arab, Armenian, Kurdish) politicians couldn’t stand each other any longer and ignored, accused, cursed, provoked, or even threatened each other. Especially from the Balkan wars on, ethnic-minority members of parliament often polemicized with CUP members about the laws of Turkification they continuously issued. Very often these ethnic-minority members supported each other in common solidarity during plenary debates against the CUP.⁵⁷ In this constellation, the CUP kept emphasizing the victimization of the Ottoman Muslims in the Balkans and threatened discordant minorities with sanctions. Although a detailed program was lacking, the CUP leadership gradually became more determined to homogenize the country by changing its demography by force.⁵⁸ Party ideologue Ziyâ Gökalp wrote extensively about turkifying the Empire by concentrating the non-Ottoman Muslims on Ottoman territory and instilling Turkish nationalism into the Ottoman Muslims.⁵⁹ According to Gökalp, this would contribute to the nascence of a new Turkey. As he wrote in a poem titled ‘Motherland’ (*Vatan*):

⁵⁶ Mehmet Mert Sunar, “Doğu Anadolu ve Kuzey Irak’ta Osmanlı Devleti ve Aşiretler: II. Abdülhamid’den II. Meşrutiyet’e,” in: *Kebikeç*, vol.10 (2000), pp.115-30.

⁵⁷ For examples of hostile parliamentary debates including rich use of profanity and even an occasional brawl, see: Tarık Zafer Tunaya, *Türkiye’de Siyasal Partiler*, vol.1, *İkinci Meşrutiyet Dönemi* (İstanbul: İletişim, 1997), pp.627-28, 488 footnote 11.

⁵⁸ This phenomenon has often been described as ‘social engineering’, a range of often ideologically driven policies directed at violently changing a population in any way whatsoever. For an application of the term on CUP policies see: Hilmar Kaiser, “The Ottoman Government and the End of the Ottoman Social Formation, 1915-1917,” paper presented at the conference *Der Völkermord an den Armeniern und die Shoah*, University of Zürich, 7 November 2001, at: <<http://www.hist.net/kieser/ghet/Essays/EssayKaiser.html>>.

⁵⁹ Ziyâ Gökalp, *Türkleşmek, İslâmlaşmak, Muasırlaşmak* (Ankara: Ziya Gökalp Yayınları, 1976), p.93. For post-war programs of Turkification cf.: Ziyâ Gökalp, *Türkçülüğün Esasları* (İstanbul: Kamer, 1996 [1921]), translated into: Ziya Gökalp, *The Principles of Turkism*, transl. Robert Devereux (Leiden: Brill, 1968).

A country that nobody plots against,
Each individual being united in ideal, language, tradition, religion,
Its parliament clean, without Boşo's speaking,
Its children happily sacrificing their lives at its borders,
Hey Turks, that is what your motherland should be! ⁶⁰

It becomes clear from this poem that Gökâlp fantasizes about a nation state, as he indulges in wishful dreams of ethnic, linguistic, religious, and political homogeneity. He refers to Yorgo Boşo, a Greek member of parliament known for vehemently criticizing CUP policies. But Gökâlp did not only romanticize a Turkish nation state using poetry. According to one of his closest students, his investigations were functional as they laid out the theoretic framework for the future Turkification of the empire. ⁶¹

It did not take long before the CUP party dictatorship started brainstorming about the at that time still vague notion of Turkification. At the party congresses in Salonica (1910, 1911) and Istanbul (1912, 1913) they adopted Turkish nationalism and emphasized 'national education', but no explicit comments were made on the fate of the Ottoman minorities. ⁶² Due to the secretive nature of the CUP and the sensitivity of this question, critical decisions were taken behind closed doors. According to Halil Menteşe (d. 1935), chairman of the Ottoman parliament, Talât stated to him in a meeting that "he was preparing for cleaning the country of treacherous elements". ⁶³ The new policy slogan 'Turkey for the Turks' has often been attributed to Talât. ⁶⁴ In May, June and August 1914, Enver Paşa organized a series of secret meetings at the War Ministry, at which "the elimination of non-Turkish masses" was discussed with Special Organization operatives, most notably one of its commanders, Eşref Kuşçubaşı (d. 1922), Enver's closest trustee. ⁶⁵ During these meetings, the weaknesses of the Ottoman Empire were juxtaposed with the presence of clusters of non-Turkish people in strategic areas, such as in the Aegean area, which harboured hundreds of thousands of Ottoman Greeks. CUP loyalists decided that these "internal tumors" once and for all had to be removed, in other words, "İnfidel İzmir had to become Turkish İzmir". ⁶⁶ This encompassing program was primarily directed against non-Muslim Ottoman civilians like Greeks, Syrians and Armenians, and secondarily against non-Turkish Muslim

⁶⁰ Fevziye A. Tansel (ed.), *Ziya Gökalp Külliyyatı 1: Şiirler ve Halk Masalları* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Yayınları, 1989), p.113.

⁶¹ Enver Behnan Şapolyo, *Ziyâ Gökâlp ve İttihadî Terakki ve Meşrutîyet Tarihi: Evli ve Fotoğraflı* (Istanbul: n.p., 1974), co-edited by Nevzat Kızılcan, p.149.

⁶² Ağâh Sırrı Levend, "İttihat ve Terakki Kongreleri," in: *Memleket*, 16 December 1947, p.2.

⁶³ Halil Menteşe, *Osmanlı Mebusan Meclisi Reisi Halil Menteşe'nin anıları* (Istanbul: Hürriyet Vakfı Yayınları, 1986), p.165.

⁶⁴ According to British sources, Talât spoke these words at the 1910 CUP congress. George P. Gooch & Harold W.V. Temperley (eds.), *British documents on the origins of the war 1898-1914* (London: Printed and published by His Majesty's Stationary Office, 1926), vol.9, part 1, document no.181, pp.207-8. However, there is no definitive evidence that corroborates this claim, although "at this conference the Turkists gained the upper hand." Tarkan Zafer Tunaya, *Türkiye'de Siyasal Partiler*, vol.3, *İttihat ve Terakki* (Istanbul: İletişim, 1997), pp.286-87.

According to a Turkish sociologist, educated in the United States, the slogan aimed at economic turkification. Ahmed Emin, *Turkey in the World War* (New Haven, NY: Yale University Press, 1930), p.113.

⁶⁵ Celâl Bayar, *Ben de yazdım: Milli Mücadele'ye Gidiş* (Istanbul: Baha, 1967), vol.5, p.1573.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, pp.1578, 1579. The concentration of Greeks in İzmir (Smyrna) prompted Turkish nationalists to use the term "İnfidel İzmir" (*gâvur İzmir*) to describe that harbour city. Vangelis Kechriotis, "From 'Giavour İzmir' to 'Hellenic Smyrna': Reconstruction of a lost Atlantis," paper presented at the conference *Nationalism, Society and Culture in post-Ottoman Southeast Europe*, University of Oxford, 29 May 2004.

populations like Arabs, Kurds, and Albanians. Small or scattered religious groups such as Alevis, Yezidis, Druzes, Jews, or Shiites were targeted as well.

The introduction of this policy of ‘nationalization’ required a great deal of organization. Existing Ottoman bureaucratic tools sufficed and needed minor creative adjustments to carry out the program of social engineering. First of all, the hierarchic fabric of Ottoman state organs allowed for the highest echelons of any ministry (such as the Minister of the Interior) to telegraphically communicate with even insignificant civil servants and police officers at county level. Discipline was reinforced not only by the proverbial Ottoman culture of obedience, but especially by the CUP’s notorious reputation for ruthlessness. Still, many written orders were revoked and replaced by covert oral orders, a typical CUP practice.⁶⁷ An other important bureaucratic apparatus was the ‘Directorate for the Settlement of Tribes and Immigrants’ (*İskân-ı Aşâir ve Muhacirîn Müdüriyeti*, henceforth İAMM). This organization was established in early 1914 and served two purposes: on the one hand, to advance the sedentarization of the many Turkoman, Kurdish, and Arab tribes, and on the other hand, to provide accommodation for homeless Muslim refugees, expelled from the Balkans and Russia.⁶⁸ It would later be expanded to constitute four branches, namely settlement, intelligence, deportation, and tribes.⁶⁹ The most prolific name in the İAMM was Şükrü Kaya, the “Director of Deportation” (*Sevkiyat Müdürü*) who organized most of the deportations.⁷⁰ Since the army would play a secondary role in the program, the concentration and purposeful canalization of a huge reservoir of violence was delegated to the Special Organization, which was reorganized in 1914 and split into an external branch assigned with instigating rebellions in Iran and Caucasia,⁷¹ and an internal branch charged with supervising the program of nationalization.⁷² The organization’s rearrangement meant that it was detached from regular Ottoman military jurisdiction and brought under the direct control of the CUP, most specifically under the auspices of Dr. Bahaeddin Şakir (1877-1922)⁷³ and Dr. Nâzım (1872-1926).⁷⁴ With a single order the CUP could now deploy tens of thousands of ruthless and heavily armed paramilitary troops to all corners of the vast empire.

⁶⁷ Covert oral orders were an important phenomenon during CUP rule. Although it was logical that genocidal orders were issued orally, even critical decisions like the alliance with Germany, and the declaration of war on the Entente powers were taken this way. *Said Halim ve Mehmed Talât Paşalar kabinelerinin Divan-ı Ali’ye sevkleri hakkında Divaniye mebusu Fuad Bey merhum tarafından verilen takrir üzerine berây-ı tahkikat kur’a isâbet eden Beşinci Şube tarafından icrâ olunan tahkikat ve zabt edilen ifâdatı muhtevidir* (Istanbul, 1918), p.4.

⁶⁸ *İkdam*, 29 December 1913 (no.6052), p.3.

⁶⁹ Cengiz Orhonlu, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu’nda Aşiretlerin İskânı* (Istanbul: Eren, 1987), p.120.

⁷⁰ Hilmar Kaiser, “Shukru Kaya and the Extermination of the Ottoman Armenians: The Portrait of a Perpetrator,” lecture at California State University, 6 April 2000.

⁷¹ Adil Hikmet Bey, *Asya’da Beş Türk* (Istanbul: Ötüken Neşriyat, 1999).

⁷² Cemal Kutay, *Birinci Dünya Harbinde Teşkilât-ı Mahsusa ve Hayber Cengi* (Istanbul: Tarih, 1962).

⁷³ Dr. Bahaeddin Şakir was born in Thrace and enjoyed his medical education at the Military Medical Academy in Istanbul. After joining the CUP in 1906 he moved to Paris where he assisted Ahmet Rıza in reviving the CUP. After returning to Istanbul he became one of the most influential members of the CUP’s Central Committee in 1912. His closeness to Talât quickly allowed him to rise in rank, exemplified by the fact that he was charged with organizing the Special Organization in 1914. His role in the persecution of the Armenians was pivotal. He was shot dead in Berlin on 17 April 1922 by Aram Yerganian, an Armenian hitman. Hikmet Çiçek, *Dr. Bahattin Şakir: İtihat ve Terakki’den Teşkilatı Mahsusa’ya bir Türk Jakobenî* (Istanbul: Kaynak, 2004).

⁷⁴ Dr. Nâzım was born in Salonica and joined the first CUP in 1889 during his medical education. He continued his study in Paris where he met Dr. Bahaeddin Şakir and worked with Ahmet Rıza to unite the CUP with the ‘Ottoman Freedom Committee’ in 1907. After 1908 he too became a member of the Central Committee, and even made it to Secretary-General of the CUP. His role in the persecution of the Armenians was as covert as it was profound. In 1918 he became Minister of Education but fled the country before the armistice. He was executed in

Along with aligning bureaucratic organs, the CUP ordered the conduct of detailed research on the demographic and ethnological characteristics of the targeted ethnic and religious groups.⁷⁵ This was initiated on 14 March 1916 by the IAMM, renamed to ‘General Directorate for Tribes and Immigrants’ (*Aşâir ve Muhacirîn Müdüriyet-i Umûmiyesi*, AMMU). These investigations were carried out by CUP specialists, continued during and after the war, and consisted of both field work and careful examination of previous research. Thus, Baha Said was assigned with researching Kızıldaş and Bektaşî communities, Mehmed Tahir and Hasan Fehmi with researching Ahi communities. Esat Uras conducted research on the Armenians, while Zekeriya Sertel concentrated mainly on Kurdish-Alevi tribes. Hâbil Âdem was assigned with mapping out details on Kurdish and Turkoman tribes.⁷⁶ Zekeriya Sertel, who worked at the Tribes division of AMMU, later wrote in his memoirs that the purpose of these research programs was “to gather information in order to act accordingly”.⁷⁷ Though most of this research was ordered by Şükrü Kaya, it becomes clear from Ottoman documents that in several instances Talât personally requested detailed information like lists and maps, often covering even the village level.⁷⁸ In the end, the CUP research program produced thousands of pages of detailed expertise on the targeted ethnic groups.

From the summer of 1913 on, the CUP gradually but resolutely launched extensive campaigns of Turkification on practically all domains of Ottoman society. Starting with geography, the CUP began turkifying place names. On 5 January 1916 Enver Paşa ordered the complete Turkification of all Armenian, Greek, and Bulgarian names denominating provinces, districts, counties, villages, mountains, and rivers.⁷⁹ This way all traces of non-Turkish cultures were wiped out, e.g. Kızılkilise (‘Red Church’) county in the Dersim district was changed into Nazımiye (after the Ottoman politician Nâzım Paşa).⁸⁰ Although Enver Paşa’s law was suspended until the end of the war, this CUP practice continued well into the 1960s and changed tens of thousands of topographic names.⁸¹ Because societal Turkification was an other important CUP program, it obliged all state organs (including all schools) to correspond and communicate only in the Turkish language and began harassing businesses in non-Muslim hands by forcing them to use Turkish in all corporate transactions. The Minister of Commerce and Agriculture, Ahmed Nesimi, admitted that this linguistic enthusiasm was in essence a method to have more Muslims

1926 by the Kemalist government for his alleged role in a plot to assassinate Mustafa Kemal (Atatürk). Ahmet Eyicil, *Doktor Nâzım Bey: İttihat ve Terakki Liderlerinden* (Ankara: Gün, 2004).

⁷⁵ Fuat Dündar, “İttihat ve Terakki’nin Etnisite Araştırmaları,” in: *Toplumsal Tarih*, vol.XVI, no.91 (2001), pp.43-50.

⁷⁶ Nejat Birdoğan (ed), Baha Said Bey, *İttihat ve Terakki’nin Alevilik-Bektaşilik Araştırması* (İstanbul: Berfin, 1995), p.9.

⁷⁷ Zekeriya Sertel, *Hatırladıklarım* (İstanbul: Gözlem, 1977), p.82.

⁷⁸ BOA, DH.ŞFR 54-A/51, Talât to provinces, 20 July 1915.

⁷⁹ Murat Koraltürk, “Milliyetçi bir refleks: Yer adlarının Türkleştirilmesi,” in: *Toplumsal Tarih*, vol.19, no.117 (2003), pp.98-99.

⁸⁰ BOA, DH.İD 97/1.

⁸¹ Koraltürk, “Milliyetçi bir refleks,” [n.79], p.99, footnote 16.

employed in the Ottoman economy. This would serve the establishment of the 'national economy' the CUP dreamed of.⁸²

In 1914, most businesses in the Aegean area were owned by Ottoman Greeks. When persuasion didn't cause the desired effect, the CUP took recourse to more violent methods of Turkification of the economy. It sent emissaries like Special Organization agent Kara Kemal to assist Responsible Secretary Celal Bayar in turkifying the economy of İzmir.⁸³ In the summer of 1914 this political and nationalist persecution gained momentum as boycotts and expropriations escalated into kidnappings and assassinations of Greek businessmen and community leaders, and even wholesale deportation and massacres of villages.⁸⁴ The fact that after this terror campaign many Ottoman Greeks opted to emigrate to Greece, abandoning their territory to the benefit of Ottoman Muslims, was perceived by the CUP as an administrative success. The program of Turkification was being translated into policy.

1.3 Diyarbekir province before World War I

Reforming Ottoman administrative units was an important aspect of the reform policy the CUP carried out. At the turn of the century, the empire was organized into provinces (*vilayet*) with governors (*vali*), districts (*sancak* or *liva*) with district governors (*mutasarrıf*), counties (*kazâ*) with mayors (*kaymakam*), and communes (*nahiye*) with directors (*müdür*). In 1914 the government revised its provinces and altered several borders and names.⁸⁵ Diyarbekir was a relatively large province (42,100 km²) locked in between the Euphrates in the west, the Tigris in the east, the Armenian plateau in the north, and the Mesopotamian desert in the south. Its continental climate ensured mild winters and extremely hot summers which at times paralysed social life. Historically, Diyarbekir was an administrative center as it used to be the headquarters of the 16th century governorship (*beylerbeyliği*) from where large parts of eastern Turkey were ruled.⁸⁶ At the eve of World War I, the Second Army was stationed in Diyarbekir city, which also harboured a court-martial and one of the largest prisons of the Ottoman Empire.⁸⁷ Although there were regional variations in the economic conditions of the province, generally it thrived due to its favourable location on the ancient Silk Road.⁸⁸ There were copper mines in Maden county and the border

⁸² "Ticaret ve Ziraat Nazırıyla mülakat," in: *Türk Yurdu*, year 1, vol.1 (21 February 1915), p.6, quoted in: Zafer Toprak, *Türkiye'de 'Milli İktisat' (1908-1918)* (Ankara: Yurt, 1982), p.80-81, footnote 26.

⁸³ Bayar, *Ben de yazdım* [n.65], vol.5, pp.1606-11.

⁸⁴ Yannis G. Mourellos, "The 1914 persecutions and the first attempt at an exchange of minorities between Greece and Turkey," in: *Balkan Studies*, vol.26, no.2 (1985), 389-414.

⁸⁵ It is possible to interpret the Ottoman practice of redistricting as an effort to reduce the demographic proportion of Christians to the benefit of Muslims, although no systematic research has been conducted with respect to this subject. Vahakn N. Dadrian, *Warrant for Genocide: Key Elements of the Turko-Armenian Conflict* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction, 1999), pp.139-44.

⁸⁶ Martin van Bruinessen, "The Ottoman conquest of Diyarbekir and the administrative organisation of the province in the 16th and 17th centuries," in: Martin van Bruinessen & Hendrik Boeschoten (eds.), *Evliya Çelebi in Diyarbekir* (Leiden: Brill, 1988), pp.13-38. Alpay Bizbirlik, *16. yüzyıl ortalarında Diyarbekir Beylerbeyliği'nde vakıflar* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 2002). Nejat Göyünç, "Diyarbekir Beylerbeyliğinin İlk İdari Taksimatı," in: *Tarih Dergisi*, vol.22 (1969), pp.23-24.

⁸⁷ Paul Dumont & François Georgeon (eds.), *Villes ottomanes à la fin de l'Empire* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1992).

⁸⁸ İbrahim Yılmazçelik, *XIX. yüzyılın ilk yarısında Diyarbakır* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1995); Abdulhalık Bakır, "Osmanlı Öncesinde Diyarbakır'da Sanayi ve Ticaret," paper presented at the conference *Oğuzlardan Osmanlıya Diyarbakır*, Dicle University, 21 May 2004.

regions with Bitlis province were known for being oil-rich, though no large-scale steps had been taken to exploit either. Like the rest of the empire, Diyarbekir was a pre-industrial region where subsistence farming and cyclic pastoralism were dominant economic occupations for peasants and nomads in the countryside.⁸⁹ In order to comprehend the further internal societal structure of Diyarbekir province, a sketch of the social characteristics of the region in the years before the war is in order.

Diyarbekir province boasted a formidable diversity of ethnic and religious groups, whether small or large, scattered or concentrated, urban or rural. The Ottoman Muslims, later denominated ‘Turks’, were the majority in urban residential areas because of the fact that they had been occupying most administrative positions for a long time. Armenians inhabiting the cities made their livings as merchants or craftsmen and in most bazaars the majority of tradesmen were indeed Armenian. Some of these Armenians were quite prosperous people, having family members abroad and being active in politics. But the bulk of Diyarbekir Armenians were peasants organized in large extended families (*gerdastans*) in villages, most specifically in the Lice, Silvan, Beşiri, and Palu districts.⁹⁰ The Kurdish population of the province can be divided in several categories: tribal versus non-tribal Kurds, and (semi-)nomadic versus sedentary. The dozens of large and powerful Kurdish tribes in the region were generally commanded by a chieftain (*ağā*) and *de facto* controlled extensive territories. All were able to mobilize thousands, sometimes tens of thousands of mounted warriors, often to combat each other in pursuit of power, honour, and booty. Non-tribal Kurds could be powerless peasants (*kurmanç*) or Kurds from noted clergy families (*meşayib*). It is important to point out that all peasants, irrespective of ethnic or religious background, payed tribute and taxes to Kurdish chieftains and landlords.⁹¹ The mere 1000 Jews of Diyarbekir province owned one small synagogue and were generally an inconspicuous ethnic group among the much larger Christian and Muslim populations. They mainly engaged in small-scale trade and some horticulture.⁹² The Yezidis, a peculiar monotheist religious group, inhabited villages in the southeastern regions of the province. Ottoman state discrimination and oppression against them pushed them into a marginal social status, which caused them to frequently engage in organized brigandry.⁹³ The Kızılbaş were both Turkoman and Kurdish heterodox Shi’ites, and inhabited only a few villages in the province whereas others were semi-nomads.⁹⁴ The Zaza, an until recently unexplored ethnic group socially close to the Kurds were villagers and occupied themselves with agriculture and horticulture. Concentrated in

⁸⁹ Hellmut Christoff, *Kurden und Armenier: Eine Untersuchung über die Abhängigkeit ihrer Lebensformen und Charakterentwicklung von der Landschaft* (Hamburg: dissertation University of Hamburg, 1935), pp.19-73.

⁹⁰ Raymond H. Kévorkian & Paul B. Paboudjian, *Les Arméniens dans l’Empire ottoman à la veille du génocide* (Paris: Editions d’Art et d’Histoire, 1992), p.392.

⁹¹ Martin van Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaikh and State: The social and political structures of Kurdistan* (London: Zed, 1992), chapters 2, 3, and 4.

⁹² A. Medyalı, *Kürdistanlı Yahudiler* (Ankara: Berhem, 1992), p.58; Walther J. Fischel, “The Jews of Kurdistan a hundred years ago: A traveler’s record,” in: *Jewish Social Studies*, vol.6 (1944), pp.195-226; Erich Brauer, *The Jews of Kurdistan* (Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 1993).

⁹³ Ralph H.W. Empson, *The cult of the Peacock Angel: A short account of the Yezidi tribes of Kurdistan* (London: AMS Press, 1928).

⁹⁴ Erdal Gezik, *Dinsel, etnik ve politik sorunlar bağlamında Alevi Kürtler* (Ankara: Kalan, 2000).

the north, the Zaza in Diyarbekir province were and are Muslims, and several important Muslim clerics emanated from them.⁹⁵ The Arabs of the province were also named Mahalmi because of the peculiar dialect they spoke. Most of them lived in Mardin but also in the villages in and around Midyat, though they numbered no more than several thousands.⁹⁶ The Syriacs (alternately named Assyrians or Arameans), an embracing denomination including all Aramaic-speaking Syrian-Orthodox, Syrian-Protestant, Syrian-Catholic, Nestorian, and Chaldean Christians, inhabited many villages but especially the southeastern parts of the province. The mountainous region around Midyat, also known as Tur Abdin, was a Syriac stronghold with dozens of often exclusively Syriac villages.⁹⁷ A demographically and politically insignificant group were the Gypsies, who lived in urban centers and were ostracized by most other groups. In eastern Anatolia the Gypsies were named Poşa or Kereçi.⁹⁸ Finally, there is both material and immaterial evidence of the existence of Shemsi communities, although their numbers seem to have shrunk dramatically by the late 19th century. These archaic sun-worshippers were under the influence of the ancient Zoroastrian religion and used to worship in several temples all over what was now the Ottoman province Diyarbekir.⁹⁹ All in all, the population of Diyarbekir province had a very heterogeneous ethnic and social composition.

For many of these ethnic communities the province bore more than average importance because of the concentration of pivotal religious locations and presence of the highest clerical authorities. Since religion defined communal boundaries in the Ottoman theocracy, this only added to the portentousness of Diyarbekir. For example, the two main monasteries of the Syriac Christians, Mor Gabriel and Deyr-ul Zaferan, were located in the Mardin district. These were not only offices of bishops and patriarchs, but in general the heart of Syriac religion, culture, and education in seminaries (*madrashto*).¹⁰⁰ Diyarbekir city harboured the Syrian-Orthodox Virgin Mary Church, the Chaldean church, the Armenian Apostolic church which was one of the largest and most sophisticated churches in the Ottoman Empire, a protestant church, and dozens of Armenian villages had churches and schools.¹⁰¹ For the Diyarbekir province Muslims the many mosques and seminaries (*medrese*) were important as places of worship, education, and socializing. Moreover, influential Islamic orders like the Nakşibendî, Kadirî, Rûfâî, and Küfrevî were active all over the province among large Zaza, Arab, but especially Kurdish families. These orders were

⁹⁵ Karl Hadank, *Mundarten der Zâzâ, hauptsächlich aus Siwerek und Kor* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1932).

⁹⁶ Hans-Jürgen Sasse, *Linguistische Analyse des arabischen Dialekts der Mhallamiye in der Provinz Mardin (Südosttürkei)*, Ph.D. Thesis, Ludwig-Maximilians University of München, Department of Semitics, 1970.

⁹⁷ The Tur Abdin region was particularly famous for its strong tribal cleavages. The two main tribes reigning in Tur Abdin were the Dekşuri and Hevêrkan, the latter originating from the Botan emirate that was violently dismantled in the mid-19th century. Both tribes had hereditary chieftains of Muslim-Kurdish descent and both tribes treated their Muslim and non-Muslim subjects (such as Syriac Christians and Yezidis) alike. Tribal interests and loyalties were superordinated to religious interests and loyalties. The continuous competition between these two tribes often escalated into assassinations and plunder. Hans Hollerweger, *Turabdin* (Linz: Freunde des Tur Abdin, 1999).

⁹⁸ Sarkis Seropyan, "Vatansız tek ulus Çingeneler ve Çingenelerin Ermenileşmişleri Hay-Poşalar," in: *Tarih ve Toplum*, vol.33, no.202 (2000), pp.21-25.

⁹⁹ Horatio Southgate, *Narrative of a Tour through Armenia, Kurdistan, Persia and Mesopotamia* (London: Bradbury and Evans, 1840), deel 2, pp.284-85.

¹⁰⁰ Gertrude Bell, *The churches and monasteries of the Tur Abdin and neighbouring districts* (Heidelberg: Carl Winter's Universitätsbuchhandlung, 1913).

lodged in large medreses even in small counties, where students were taught on religion, language (Arabic, Persian, Kurdish, Ottoman), and history. Some of these were quite famous for their quality education, such as the Red Medrese (*Medreseya Sor*) of Cizre, the *Hatuniye*, *Zinciriye* and *Sitti Radviye* medreses of Mardin, and the *Mesudiye* and *Sitrabas* medreses of Diyarbakir city.¹⁰² Furthermore, local saints and cults (*ziyaret*), visited by people of all religious groups, were scattered all over the province. One example is the Sultan Şeyhmus cult, located at the Şeyhan caves between Diyarbakir and Mardin.

Westerners too lived in the province. Diyarbakir had a French consulate and a British vice consulate (that were revoked when the Ottoman Empire declared war on France and Britain) and an American Protestant mission. The German government considered the deployment of a vice consulate because of the possibility that Diyarbakir could become a hub along the Baghdad railway, but decided to found consulates in Mosul and Aleppo.¹⁰³ Several dozens of American, German and French, both Protestant and Catholic missionaries were active in education and health care in the province. However, due to its rugged and inaccessible terrain like most eastern provinces of the Ottoman Empire, most of the province was *terra incognita* for western observers. The West also exerted its presence through former Ottoman subjects who possessed western passports. Mostly these were Christian notables who became Russian, French, or British subjects to evade high taxes and derive benefit from the political immunity western citizenship offered in many instances.

It is very difficult to come to quantitative grips with Diyarbakir province due to the absence of reliable demographic data on all ethnicities inhabiting the province before the war.¹⁰⁴ Figures from various sources contradict each other, which has hampered academic efforts undertaken to map out the demography of the province. According to the 1913-1914 census performed by the Armenian Patriarchate of Istanbul, the Diyarbakir province Armenians numbered 106,867 in 249 localities.¹⁰⁵ According to a German consular report, the ethnic distribution in Mardin district was as follows: 27,000 Muslims, 10,000 Armenian Catholics, 10,000 Syriac Christians, 1500 Syriac Catholics, 1400 Protestants, 100 Chaldeans, summing up to a total of 50,000 inhabitants in the entire district.¹⁰⁶ The Armenian Patriarchate calculated the total number of Armenians in Mardin to be 14,547 whereas according to the German consulate

¹⁰¹ Orhan Cezmi Tuncer, *Diyarbakır Kiliseleri* (Diyarbakır: Diyarbakır Büyükşehir Belediyesi Kültür ve Sanat Yayınları, 2002).

¹⁰² Zeynelabidin Zinar, *Xwendina medresê* (Stockholm: Pencinar, 1993). Orhan Cezmi Tuncer, *Diyarbakır Camileri* (Diyarbakır: Diyarbakır Büyükşehir Belediyesi Kültür ve Sanat Yayınları, 1996).

¹⁰³ *Politisches Archiv Auswärtiges Amt* (German Archives Berlin, hereafter cited as *PAAA*), R14078, Notes of Foreign Affairs Undersecretary Zimmermann, 5 March 1913, enclosure no.2.

¹⁰⁴ The study of early twentieth-century Ottoman demography demands careful scrutiny as it is not only difficult to produce concrete and reliable statistics, but it is also very often a political minefield in which contemporary and present-day partisan scholarship plays a role. Kemal H. Karpat, *Ottoman Population 1830-1914: Demographic and Social Characteristics* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985). Justin McCarthy, *Muslims and Minorities: The Population of Ottoman Anatolia and the End of the Empire* (New York: New York University, 1983). Levon Marashlian, *Politics and Demography: Armenians, Turks, and Kurds in the Ottoman Empire* (Cambridge, MA: Zoryan Institute, 1991).

¹⁰⁵ Kévorkian & Paboudjian, *Les Arméniens dans l'Empire ottoman* [n.90], p.59.

¹⁰⁶ *PAAA*, Botschaft Konstantinopel 170, Aleppo consul Röbber to special ambassador Hohenlohe-Langenburg (Istanbul), 27 September 1915.

they numbered no more than 11,400, assuming that all Protestants were ethnic Armenians. An Armenian almanac estimated the pre-war number of Armenians at 124,000.¹⁰⁷ Johannes Lepsius, director of the *Deutsche Orient Mission*, diverged from this calculation:

Von seiner Gesamtbevölkerung von 471500 Bewohnern waren 166000 Christen, und zwar 105000 Armenier und 60000 Syrer (Nestorianer und Chaldäer) und 1000 Griechen. Die übrige Bevölkerung setzt sich zusammen aus 63000 Türken, 200000 Kurden, 27000 Kizilbasch (Schi'iten) und 10000 Tscherkessen. Dazu kommen noch 4000 Jesidis (sogenannte Teufelsanbeter) und 1500 Juden.¹⁰⁸

Ottoman archival material diverges even further from these numbers:

Table 1: Ottoman demographic data for Diyarbekir province.¹⁰⁹

Ethnicity	Number
Jewish	1954
Protestant	5417
Chaldean	4783
Greek Catholic	113
Greek	1815
Syriac Catholic	3582
Syriac	28,699
Armenian Catholic	9004
Armenian	51,405
Muslim	434,236
Total	541,203

According to this demographic classification, Diyarbekir province in 1913 harboured 1954 Jews, 104,818 Christians, and 434,236 Muslims. On the one hand, it is very likely that in this table the demographic balance between Muslims and Christians is skewed in the advantage of the Muslims, and on the other hand there is no mention of marginal social groups such as Yezidis or Alevis living in the province. All in all, the statistics clearly contradict each other. For the bulk of the population it seems reasonable to contend that for approximately one-thirds it was made up of Christians and for approximately two-thirds of Muslims.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁷ Theodig, *Mius Merelotzu: Amenoun Daretzoutzu* (Istanbul: n.p., 1921), p.261, quoted in: Mesrob K. Krikorian, *Armenians in the service of the Ottoman Empire 1860-1908* (London: Routledge, 1977), pp.19, 117 footnote 6.

¹⁰⁸ Johannes Lepsius, *Der Todesgang des Armenischen Volkes: Bericht über das Schicksal des Armenischen Volkes in der Türkei während des Weltkrieges* (Potsdam: Tempelverlag, 1919), p.74.

¹⁰⁹ BOA, DH.EUM.MTK 74/51, 3 December 1913, enclosure on p.3. Justin McCarthy rectifies an other official Ottoman figure of 73,226 to 89,131. Justin McCarthy, *Muslims and Minorities: the population of Ottoman Anatolia and the end of the empire* (New York: New York University Press, 1983), pp.69-70.

¹¹⁰ This is confirmed by Lepsius: "Die christliche Bevölkerung betrug also reichlich 1/3, die muhammedanische 2/3 der Gesamteinwonerschaft des Wilayets." Lepsius, *Der Todesgang* [n.108], p.74.

1.4 Social relations between the groups

In his travel account of 1895, the English ethnographer Parry wrote about his experiences in Diyarbekir province:

It is most striking, when on first visits the East, to find a mixed company thoroughly enjoying each other's society, which, when analysed, would be found to contain an Old Syrian or two, a Protestant, half-a-dozen Moslems, and a substantial quota of the Papal varieties. Yet they are all talking together in perfect good-fellowship, smoking each other's cigarettes, and discussing with quite marvellous tact the latest political news.¹¹¹

In Mardin city, for example, serenity ruled when the British traveller and photographer Gertrude Bell visited the citadel town, which she qualified as “more splendid[ly] than any place I have ever seen.” According to her, all different ethno-religious elements peacefully coexisted in perfect harmony.¹¹² The British officer Mark Sykes, who had conducted fieldwork and several studies on the Ottoman Empire, visited Palu in 1913 and wrote that there was no trace of enmity between the local Zazas and Armenians.¹¹³ Sykes also wrote that İbrahim Paşa (d.1909)¹¹⁴ of the Mîlan tribe had

encouraged Christians (Armenians and Chaldaeans) to take refuge in the vicinity of Viranshehr, and established a bazaar in that town, which rapidly increased in size. While other tribes and chiefs plundered and massacred Armenians, Ibrahim protected and encouraged Christians of all denominations. It is estimated that during the great Armenian massacres he saved some 10,000 Armenians from destruction.¹¹⁵

The British army major Soane, who was fluent in Kurdish and had traversed the Diyarbekir region in native disguise, commented two years before the war that the Diyarbekir Chaldeans “were on excellent terms with their ferocious neighbours,” referring to the Kurdish tribes dwelling north of Diyarbekir city.¹¹⁶ Benevolent Muslim notables wrote optimistic articles that in Diyarbekir Armenians and Kurds had always gotten along well and that the Ottoman government was to blame for any possible mutual distrust between these two peoples that had

¹¹¹ Oswald H. Parry, *Six Months in a Syrian Monastery: being the record of a visit to the head quarters of the Syrian church in Mesopotamia with some account of the Yazidis or devil worshippers of Mosul and El Jilwah, their sacred book* (London: Horace Cox, 1895), p.41.

¹¹² *Gertrude Bell Archives* (Robinson Library, University of Newcastle upon Tyne) [hereafter cited as *GBA*], Gertrude Bell to her mother, 25 April 1911.

¹¹³ Mark Sykes, *The Caliph's Last Heritage: A Short History of the Turkish Empire* (London: n.p., 1915), p.366.

¹¹⁴ İbrahim Paşa was born into the Mîlan tribe in the Urfa area, became chieftain in 1863, and managed to build a reputation for himself by amassing tribal successes. When Sultan Abdulhamid II established the mounted Hamidiye regiments in 1891 he joined them and acquired even more respect from the population. He soon became the single most powerful commander of the Hamidiye regiments in the eastern provinces, boasting fortified headquarters and many thousands of mounted warriors of the 41st, 42nd and 43rd regiments. When the CUP wrested the 1908 revolution İbrahim repudiated the new cabinet and declared his independence. The Ottoman army was deployed and İbrahim was definitively defeated and forced to flee into the mountains south of Urfa, where he died. M. Wiedemann, “İbrahim Paschas Glück und Ende,” in: *Asien*, vol.8 (1909), pp.34-54.

¹¹⁵ Sykes, *The Caliph's Last Heritage* [n.113], p.324.

¹¹⁶ Ely B. Soane, *To Mesopotamia and Kurdistan in disguise: with historical notices of the Kurdish tribes and the Chaldeans of Kurdistan* (London: J. Murray, 1912), p.66.

lived in “eternal brotherhood” (*vîjak-ı kadîm*) and even “consanguinity” (*yekdestî*).¹¹⁷ According to these views, pre-war interethnic relations were peaceful and the atmosphere was congenial.

The interethnic and interfaith relations in Diyarbekir in the years before 1914 may not have been as idyllic as some observers have portrayed. In fact, they were frail due to the prolonged crisis that afflicted the Ottoman Empire. The gradual expulsion of Ottoman rule from the Balkans co-occurred with massacres perpetrated against Ottoman Muslims in places like Crete,¹¹⁸ and conjured questions of loyalty of Christian citizens to the Ottoman state. During the Abdulhamid era massacres which struck Diyarbekir on 1 November 1895, the destruction of human lives and property was massive and profound.¹¹⁹ Approximately 25,000 Armenians forcibly converted to Islam in all of Diyarbekir province, 1100 Armenians were killed in Diyarbekir city and 800 or 900 Armenians in the outlying villages, while 155 women and girls were carried off by Kurdish tribesmen. In Silvan county 7000 Armenians converted and 500 women were carried off. In Palu 3000 and in Siverek 2500 converted to escape being massacred. In Silvan, along with Palu (where 3000 Armenians converted), “7500 are reduced to destitution and 4000 disappeared: killed, died of cold, etc., or escaped elsewhere”.¹²⁰ According to Kévorkian and Paboudjian, 2000 houses and 2500 shops and ateliers were burnt down in the province during the 1895 massacres.¹²¹ An unknown percentage of these converts reconverted to their faiths, returned to their villages, reclaimed their possessions, and rebuilt their homes and businesses once the persecution was discontinued.

Still, the memory of the atrocities was very much alive among the population of Diyarbekir. Ely Soane wrote in his travel account:

[...] it is, among the underworld of western Kurdistan and northern Mesopotamia, a common subject of talk in the cafés how much the Sultan and the Government paid the ruffians of the town to do their dirty work, and how much the Kurdish Aghas presented to the authorities to be allowed to finish unhindered the blood-feuds that existed between themselves and Armenians sheltering in Diyarbekir and the towns of Armenia. A very reign of terror overshadows the apparently peaceful and prosperous town.¹²²

The province was beset by tribal, ethno-religious, and political conflicts. The heavily armed tribes of the province frequently engaged in armed combat to overpower each other and spared very few when beating a competitor tribe. In the Hazakh district (present-day İdil) Serhan II,¹²³

¹¹⁷ Hüseyin Paşazâde, “Kürdler ve Ermeniler,” in: *Kürd Teavün ve Terakki Gazetesi*, 30 January 1909, pp.3-6. Cf. Mehmed E. Bozarslan (ed.), *Kürd Teavün ve Terakki Gazetesi: Kovara Kurdi-Tirkî 1908-1909* (Uppsala: Deng, 1998), pp.431-4.

¹¹⁸ Justin McCarthy, *Death and exile: The ethnic cleansing of Ottoman Muslims, 1821-1922* (Princeton, NJ: The Darwin Press, 1995).

¹¹⁹ Gustave Meyrier, *Les Massacres de Diarbekir: Correspondance diplomatique du Vice-Consul de France 1894-1896* (Paris: L’Inventaire, 2000).

¹²⁰ *Blue Book Turkey*, No.8 (1896), enclosure in document no.140, p.127.

¹²¹ Kévorkian & Paboudjian, *Les Arméniens* [n.90], p.398.

¹²² Ely B. Soane, *To Mesopotamia and Kurdistan in disguise: with historical notices of the Kurdish tribes and the Chaldeans of Kurdistan* (London: J. Murray, 1912), pp.65-66.

¹²³ Serhan II was a notorious Kurdish brigand, whose ruthlessness was only matched by his greed. In the pre-war years his power gained momentum as he succeeded his father as chieftain of the Mala Osman. Fed up with his terror, a group of Tur Abdin Syrians filed a complaint against him at the Syriac Patriarchate in Istanbul, requesting a parliamentary inquiry and prosecution of Serhan. Contrary to their expectation, the case was neglected and no legal action was undertaken. *BOA*, DH.MUİ 77-2/15, 9 August 1910.

chieftain of the Mala Osman dynasty of the Hevêrki tribe perceived a threat in the person of Khalife Meso of the Mala Meso dynasty of the Şeroxan tribe. In 1913 tribesmen loyal to Serhan carried out a raid against Kîwex village, where Meso, his brother Cercur, and his nephew Kato were living. In the ensuing massacre 24 men including young boys and 2 women were killed. Although Serhan was a Muslim and Meso of Yezidi descent, there were both Yezidis among Serhan's adherents and Muslims among Meso's adherents, thus clearly rendering this a tribal conflict.¹²⁴ An unknown number of inhabitants were killed in the Syriac village of B'sorino in 1907 during a punitive campaign by Midyat Kurds who feared that the local chieftains would become too influential. The church was burnt down and the houses were destroyed, but inhabitants proclaiming loyalty were allowed to work for the Midyat chieftains.¹²⁵

When Gertrude Bell toured Tur Abdin in the years before the war, she was robbed at night in the village of Khakh.¹²⁶ Since the theft was committed in the area ruled practically autonomously by the very powerful Çelebi dynasty of the Hevêrki tribe, their chieftain İsmail was brought in from Mzizah village. İsmail was furious about the breach of cultural norms of hospitality. Having no suspects, he arbitrarily rounded up five men and the mayor of Khakh, a man named Melke, threatening them with incarceration. Soon, it became known that tribesmen around chieftain Abdîkê Hemzikê of the semi-nomadic Zakhuran tribe¹²⁷ were responsible for the theft.¹²⁸ The Çelebi chieftain used the opportunity to settle tribal scores and join forces with local government forces to assassinate Abdîkê Hemzikê, disperse the Zakhuran, and pillage their villages seizing all of their cattle.¹²⁹ The uncrowned master of social banditry however, was Alikê Battê of the Haco dynasty of the Hevêrkan tribe, whose name alone struck fear and respect into the hearts of the locals.¹³⁰ In August 1913 Alikê Battê engaged in a skirmish with gendarmes during an attempt to rob the Ottoman post carriage in Nusaybin. The post was delayed for some time and the brigand escaped into the Tur Abdin mountains.¹³¹ At the end of 1913 Ali and his accomplices were arrested and incarcerated but profited from the general amnesty the government had granted.¹³² Although they were threatened with re-imprisonment if they would

¹²⁴ Ömer Şahin, *Komkuji li hemberi Ezidiyan* (Heidelberg, 2001), unpublished private manuscript.

¹²⁵ *GBA*, diary entry for 17 May 1909.

¹²⁶ For details on Khakh village see: Hollerweger, *Turabdin* [n.97], pp.164-75.

¹²⁷ According to tribal myths, the Zakhuran were remnants of a huge tribe commanding a vast area in Northern Mesopotamia, until they split up and formed the two major tribes in the region: Hevêrkan and Dekşurî. Due to their conflicts with the Çelebi core, they sided with Haco Ağa of the Hevêrkan tribe and became active in Kurdish nationalism in the Republican era. Their power crumbled, and in the 1940s they numbered a mere 500 tribesmen. *Aşiretler Raporu* (İstanbul: Kaynak, 2003, second edition), p.250. Presently the Zakhuran are a relatively small tribe, centered in Zakhuran village, 40 kilometres east of Midyat. They own the villages of Harebreş, Gundê Keportî, Ömerê Ahu, Sîvok, Sabrika, İstavran, Gelîta, Mêvenka, Hirabehorî, Hirabegura, Hirabecibra, Çalkagundo, Hasakor, Ancik, and Hirabehala. For data on the Zakhuran tribe see: Cevdet Türkay, *Başbakanlık Arşivi Belgelerine Göre Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda Oymak, Aşiret ve Cemaatlar* (İstanbul: İşaret, 2001), 146.

¹²⁸ *GBA*, diary entries for 24, 25, 26, 27, 28 and 29 May 1909.

¹²⁹ This is confirmed by Abdîkê Hemzikê's grandson. Interview conducted in Kurdish with Aslan family (Zakhuran tribe), Midyat (Mardin province), 28 July 2004.

¹³⁰ Alikê Battê was relatively young when he became one of the most charismatic and fierce chieftains in Kurdish tribal history. He avenged his uncle Haco II by killing his murderer Cimo with his bare hands. He waged a guerrilla war against the Ottoman government for two decades, only to perish during a skirmish in 1919. For more on Alikê Battê see: Mustafa Aldur, "1850-1950 yılları arası Turabdin'e Hevêrkan ve Mala Osmên," in: *Özgür Politika*, 15 September 2002; *Public Record Office* (British Archives London, hereafter cited as PRO), Foreign Office (FO) 371/107502, 149523, 163688, 3050.

¹³¹ *BOA*, DH.ID 145-2/38, 13 August 1913.

¹³² *BOA*, DH.EUM.EMN 38/7, 1 December 1913.

continue their brigandage, after being released, they resumed their criminal careers and were no longer sought after.¹³³

Clashes of tribal nature did not only occur in the Mardin district. The north and east of Diyarbakir province were other peripheral regions with influential Kurdish tribes competing for power. Most specifically, the Xerzan (Garzan) valley in the Beşiri district was torn by tribal warfare. The largest conflict was that between the Reşkotan and Etmankî tribes, which was settled through a victory won by the former.¹³⁴ The feud between the Elikan and Pencînaran tribes was an other source of violence in the Garzan region.¹³⁵ The latter conflict was provoked by Pencînar chieftain Bişarê Çeto, a loose cannon, who had telegraphically expressed his joy over the 1908 revolution in the hope of being left alone by the government.¹³⁶ Together with his equally trigger-happy brother Cemil Çeto they were known for extorting Armenian, Kurdish, and Syriac villagers in the region.¹³⁷ These two brigands had been robbing and murdering at will but legal action was suspended in July 1914 and the Çeto brothers evaded prosecution.¹³⁸

There were also intra-tribal intrigues and power struggles, most notably in the Reman tribe. Its famous female chieftain Perîxan, widow of İbrahim Paşa, had six sons who competed for succession: Mustafa, Said, Emîn, Abdullah, İbrahim, and Ömer.¹³⁹ In order to succede their mother, the sons had to outclass each other in absorption and exertion of power. In other words, they had to express leadership qualities. Of all her sons, Ömer was particularly eligible for this fratricidal operation due to his ferociousness. Before the war, Ömer's campaign of plunder, provocation of government forces, and bravado did not go unnoticed. In the summer of 1914, the government declared him *persona non grata* and ordered him arrested and incarcerated. Ömer escaped prosecution and retreated into the Garzan region.¹⁴⁰ Finally, the Zirkî tribe in Lice had been fighting off the aforementioned Mîlan tribe to gain control over parts of the northern region of Diyarbakir province. Their chieftain Aziz Sabri had aligned himself with the CUP when İbrahim refused to submit to their rule.¹⁴¹

Ethno-religious conflict was an other form of strife. Missionary activity among the various Christian churches was one source of discontent and conflict. When a young Jacobite Syriac convert to Catholicism dared to convert one of his fellow villagers to Catholicism, he was first

¹³³ BOA, MV 194/22, 8 November 1914.

¹³⁴ "Li Çiyaye Qîre, Delana Paşo, şerê Reşkotîyan û Etmankîyan: Şerê Filîtê Qûto û Mamê Elê Etmankî," in: Salihê Kevirbirî, *Filîtê Qûto: Serpêhatî, Dîrok, Sosyolojî* (İstanbul: Pêrî, 2001), pp.59-75. In this war Reşkotan chieftain Filîtê Qûto gained a reputation for ferocity and fearlessness as a warrior. His saga was immortalized in a long lamentation (*kîlam*) equally named "Filîtê Qûto" by Kurdish folk singers such as Dengbêj Şakiro, Karapetê Xaço, and Dengbêj Reşo. Salihê Kevirbirî, "Deng û Awaza Xerzan," in: *Özgür Politika*, 3 January 2000.

¹³⁵ "Şer û kîlamak ji herêma Xerzan: Şerê Pencînaran û Elikan," in: *Ibid.*, pp.11-18. This conflict had been raging since the 1890s, when Hamidiye regiments had threatened the Elikan's domination in certain areas around Xerzan. İsmail Beşikçi, *Doğu'da Değişim ve Yapısal Sorunlar (Göçebe Alikan Aşireti)* (Ankara: Sevinç, 1969), pp.78-79.

¹³⁶ Bişarê Çeto and 5 other chieftains to the editor, Diyarbakir, 28 December 1908, quoted as "Telgrafât-ı Hususiye," in: *Kürd Teavün ve Terakki Gazetesi*, 9 January 1909, p.26. Cf. Bozarslan, *Kürd Teavün ve Terakki Gazetesi* [n.117], p.302.

¹³⁷ BOA, DH.EUM.EMN 38/30, 6 December 1913.

¹³⁸ BOA, DH.EUM.EMN 89/5, 28 July 1914.

¹³⁹ "Ji birakujîya nava eşîran nîmûneyeke sosret: Emînê Perîxanê - Evdilê Birahîm," in: Kevirbirî, *Filîtê Qûto* [n.134], pp.49-58.

¹⁴⁰ BOA, DH.ID 80/5, 8 August 1914.

¹⁴¹ Şevket Beysanoğlu, *Anıtları ve Kitabeleri ile Diyarbakır Tarihi* (Diyarbakır: Diyarbakır Büyükşehir Belediyesi Kültür ve Sanat Yayınları, 1996), vol.2: *Akkoyunlular'dan Cumhuriyete Kadar*, p.773, footnote 17.

interned at Deyr-ul Zaferan. When the monks found out he wouldn't reconvert they beat him up and chased him out.¹⁴² A Protestant Armenian remembered well that before the war, there were weekly brawls between Catholic and Protestant Armenians in his town. On several occasions even the clergy joined the fighting.¹⁴³ In Lice, Syrians and Armenians squabbled over the Akkilise monastery which both communities aimed to appropriate. The government mitigated the conflict and a compromise was reached.¹⁴⁴ However, the severest conflicts seem to have raged between Muslims and Christians. When Gertrude Bell visited Diyarbekir she noticed

the nervous anxiety which is felt by both Christians and Moslems – each believing that the other means to murder him at the first opportunity – is in itself a grave danger and very little is needed at Diarbekr to set them at each other's throats. During the 3 days that I was there tales of outbreaks in different parts of the empire were constantly being circulated in the bazaars. I have no means of knowing whether they were true, but after each new story people went home and fingered at their rifles.¹⁴⁵

These ethnic tensions may have also well been conflicts based on economic interests, since there was an ethnically organized labour market. While Armenians occupied most positions in the Diyarbekir trade world, together with Syrians they had also monopolized the cloth production. Kurds controlled the livestock trade.¹⁴⁶ Due to the Abdulhamid era massacres, no love was lost between the Christian and Muslim merchants in the pre-war years. Muslim shopkeepers, outnumbered by Christian tradesmen, fostered jealousy and hate towards their colleagues.¹⁴⁷ This opportunism was reported by the German vice consul in Mosul, Holstein, as follows:

Im allgemeinen bekümmert sich der Kurde in der Gegend von Diarbekir nicht viel um die Politik einzelner Kurdenscheichs, er profitiert nur von der Gelegenheit, sich durch Raub und Plünderung zu bereichern und erblickt in der manchmal damit verbundenen Ermordung einiger Armenier weiter kein Verbrechen. So erklärte mir ein Kurdischer Holzhacker in Diarbekir, auf meine Frage, wieviel Armenier er schon auf dem Gewissen habe, ganz naiv: Genau könne er es nicht sagen, aber rund ein halbes Dutzend würden es wohl schon sein.¹⁴⁸

Possible palliatives and mitigations were dismissed. When Süleyman Bey of the noted Cemilpaşazâde dynasty urged the Muslim marketers of Diyarbekir to treat the Armenians with respect and bury their hatchets, he was met with resistance and ridicule, and experienced great frustration.¹⁴⁹ The Armenians, on their turn, boycotted all Muslim-owned shops at Christmas 1908.¹⁵⁰ The Diyarbekir bazaar faced far graver situations when Muslim merchants were simply allowed to snatch Christian property. During the great fire of August 1914 the grain market of

¹⁴² Yves Ternon, *Mardin 1915: Anatomie pathologique d'une destruction* (special issue of the *Revue d'Histoire Arménienne Contemporaine*, vol.4, 2002), p.163.

¹⁴³ James Sutherland, *The adventures of an Armenian boy* (Ann Arbor, MI: The Ann Arbor Press, 1964), p.33.

¹⁴⁴ BOA, DH.ID 162-2/51, 16 August 1913.

¹⁴⁵ GBA, Gertrude Bell to her mother, 6 June 1909.

¹⁴⁶ Alphons J. Sussnitzki, "Zur Gliederung wirtschaftlicher Arbeit nach Nationalitäten in der Türkei," in: *Archiv für Wirtschaftsforschung im Orient*, vol.2 (1917), pp.382-407.

¹⁴⁷ Beysanoğlu, *Diyarbekir Tarihi* [n.141], pp.760-1.

¹⁴⁸ PAAA, Holstein to Bethmann-Hollweg, 22 May 1913.

¹⁴⁹ GBA, diary entry for 30 April 1909.

Diyarbakir became the scene of mass plunder as many Muslim merchants joined hands in seizing the opportunity to loot the stores of Christians. Soon it became known that the police chief, Memduh Bey, had “allowed Kurds and Muslims to pillage Armenian stores” (*Kürtlerle müslümanların Ermeni mağazalarını yağma etmelerine müsaade olunduğu*).¹⁵¹ According to Mihran Boyadjian, an Ottoman-Armenian civil inspector, Memduh had started the fire himself to create opportunities for pillage.¹⁵² Not only was the involvement in the pogrom massive, the apathetic attitude of local government agents to the violence implied tacit approval.

Political conflicts were usually conflicts between political factions on the one hand, and the Ottoman state on the other. The Armenians of Diyarbakir were generally anti-Russian and many adhered to the Dashnak party, that desired Armenian autonomy. Concretely, its program aimed at more freedom and more decentralization in the Ottoman administration of the eastern provinces, the introduction of Armenian as educational and official language, and an end to injustice, usurpation, and expropriation committed mostly by Kurdish tribes against Armenian peasants.¹⁵³ Chief editor of the Armenian publishing organ *Azadarmat* was Rupen Zartarian, a noted Armenian revolutionary who hailed from Diyarbakir. Kurdish nationalism, though not as organized and settled as its Armenian counterpart, also existed in the province. On 19 September 1908 Müftü Suphî Efendi founded the Diyarbakir office of the ‘Kurdish Assistance and Progress Society’ (*Kürt Teaviin ve Terakki Cemiyeti*) in Diyarbakir. Prominent members were Dr. Mehmed Şükrü (Sekban), former mayor of Diyarbakir Piriñçizâde Arif, Mirikatibizâde Ahmed Cemil (Asena), Mehmed Tahir, and Halil Hayalî.¹⁵⁴ According to its statutes, it aimed to observe the constitution, pursue the notion of Ottomanism, end tribal warfare, and maintain “harmony and good relations between their compatriots the Armenians, Nestorians, and other Ottoman subjects”.¹⁵⁵ The Bedirxan dynasty, a remnant of the omnipotent 19th-century Botan tribal confederation, were involved in explicitly Kurdish-nationalist politics.¹⁵⁶ An adherent of Kurdish nationalism was Derwiş Ağa of Çelik village, south of Midyat, who allied himself with the Bedirxans as a means to protest against misrule and corruption by lower Ottoman officials.¹⁵⁷ However, there were also ideologically-driven politicians such as Hasan Bey of Cizre, a cousin of the noted nationalist Abdulrezzak Bedirxan, whose brother Mîran chieftain Süleyman Bey was shot dead by Ottoman gendarmes near Cizre. Hasan explained to the vice consul Holstein that he had no doubts that Russia would logistically assist the Kurdish national movement in liberating Kurdistan from the “Turkish yoke” and establishing a Kurdish nation state.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁰ *GBA*, diary entry for 9 February 1909.

¹⁵¹ *BOA*, DH.ŞFR 44/234, Emniyet-i Umûmiye Müdüriyeti (Ali Münif) to Diyarbakir, 13 September 1914.

¹⁵² Vartkes Yeghiayan (ed.), *British Foreign Office Dossiers on Turkish War Criminals* (Pasadena, CA: AAIC, 1991), p.480.

¹⁵³ *PAAA*, Holstein to Bethmann-Hollweg, 22 May 1913. For a history of the Dashnaks see: Louise Nalbandian, *The Armenian Revolutionary Movement* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1963), pp.151-78.

¹⁵⁴ Tunaya, *Türkiye’de Siyasal Partiler* [n.57], vol.1, pp.430-4.

¹⁵⁵ *Kürt Teaviin ve Terakki Cemiyeti Nizamnamesi* (Istanbul: Kasbar, 1324), p.1, article 1.

¹⁵⁶ Malmisani, *Cizira Botanlı Bedirhaniler ve Bedirhani ailesi derneği’nin tutanakları* (Spånga, Sweden: Apec, 1994).

¹⁵⁷ *PAAA*, Holstein to Bethmann-Hollweg, 22 May 1913.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

It is quite difficult if not impossible to describe the relationships between the dozens of ethno-religious and political communities in Diyarbekir province with one adjective. Claiming that ‘everything was fine,’ or that ‘the religions did not get along’ would oversimplify the complex relationship between Kurds and Armenians, or between Syriacs and Arabs. Very often the relationship depended on local conditions. Nevertheless, it is possible to state that the absence or very feeble presence of a state monopoly of violence in rural areas allowed for the maintenance of many conflicts, be it tribal or ethno-social. Therefore, living conditions were relatively insecure, with arbitrary exertion of (mortal) violence by certain powerful tribes and state agents. This only added to the general atmosphere of distrust and sectarianism among the inhabitants of the province.

Chapter 2: Persecution of Christian communities, 1915

2.1 Mobilization and war

The Committee of Union and Progress had not remained idle in Diyarbakir province before the war. The first CUP office in Diyarbakir was opened on 23 July 1908 by Ziyâ Gökâlp, who after all was a native of the region, and also was its representative in the party's Central Committee.¹⁵⁹ Gökâlp began publishing the newspaper *Peyman*, which adopted a relatively modest tone and emphasized coexistence of the various Ottoman subjects.¹⁶⁰ After the catastrophic defeats of the Balkan wars, the atmosphere changed as relations polarized. The CUP dictatorship exerted its influence in this province through a network of mainly Kurdish members. The most influential CUP members in Diyarbakir were those related to the wealthy and powerful Kurdish Pirinçizâde dynasty, who owned large estates in the province, including the rice fields west of Diyarbakir city.¹⁶¹ One of their kinsmen was deputy Aziz Feyzi (1879-1933), who was known for his coarseness and fanatic patriotism. He was the son of Pirinçizâde Arif, who passed away in 1909 and had adhered to the Kurdish Assistance and Progress Society (see page 30). According to a German report Feyzi had undertaken a study trip to Germany in 1911.¹⁶² On behalf of many other Kurdish notables, he vehemently protested in the Ottoman parliament against the proposed government plan of expropriating Kurdish landowners. Feyzi was a CUP hardliner. He had held fierce and hostile discussions with Armenian member of parliament Vartkes Serengulian (1871-1915) in which he accused Vartkes of sinister Armenian separatist revolutionary designs.¹⁶³ He became more and more fanatic in his anti-Armenian emotions, and reportedly had Ohannes Kazazian, a Catholic Armenian from Mardin and his political rival in the elections, assassinated in 1913.¹⁶⁴ At the outbreak of the war, Mihran Boyadjian travelled to Diyarbakir and encountered an energetic Feyzi on the way:

Chemin faisant, nous parlions souvent politique en voiture. Feyzi Bey ne manquait pas de glisser, dans ses conversations, quelque pointes de menace contre mes coreligionnaires. "Les Arméniens," répétait-il, avec amertume, "se sont mal conduits à notre égard, pendant la guerre balkanique dans nos jours de détresse. Le patriarche Zaven le Catholikos d'Etchmiazine et Nubar one [sic] cherché à recourir à l'intervention étrangère; cela vous coûtera cher, mon ami, votre avenir est en danger".¹⁶⁵

¹⁵⁹ Şevket Beysanoğlu, *Ziyâ Gökâlp'in İlk Yazı Hayatı: 1894-1909* (İstanbul: Diyarbakır'ı Tanıtma Derneği Neşriyatı, 1956), pp.11-12.

¹⁶⁰ Up until the Balkan wars, Gökâlp used to compare Ottoman society to U.S. society as in both countries many different ethnic groups coexisted under one denomination, Ottoman respectively American. In fact, Gökâlp even rejected Turkish ethnic nationalism as it entailed nation-building based on blood bonds, which he considered unreal. Mehmed Mehdi, "Türklük ve Osmanlılık," in: *Peyman*, vol.II, quoted in: *Ibid.*, pp.99-101, 105.

¹⁶¹ According to one researcher of the period, the Pirinçizâde dynasty owned 30 villages in the vicinity of Diyarbakir city. Malmisani, *Kürt Teavün ve Terakki Cemiyeti ve Gazetesi* (Spånga, Sweden: Apec, 1998), p.41.

¹⁶² PAAA, R14084, Mutius to Bethmann Hollweg, 14 June 1914.

¹⁶³ *Meclisi Mebusan Zabıt Ceridesi*, first election period, ninety-ninth sitting, third session, p.2894.

¹⁶⁴ Jacques Rhétoré, *Les chrétiens aux bêtes! Souvenirs de la guerre sainte proclamée par les Turcs contre les chrétiens en 1915* (unpublished manuscript, Bibliothèque du Saulchoir), pp.59-60.

¹⁶⁵ Yeghiayan, *British Foreign Office Dossiers* [n.152], p.479. Given his reputation, Aziz Feyzi's assignment to Diyarbakir caused unrest and anxiety among Armenian politicians in Diyarbakir. Gaïdz F. Minassian, "Les relations entre le Comité Union et Progrès et la Fédération Révolutionnaire Arménienne à la veille de la Première Guerre mondiale d'après les sources arméniennes," in: *Revue d'histoire arménienne contemporaine*, vol.1 (1995), p.90, footnote 27.

Finally he threatened: “Vous aller voir maintenant, ce que c’est que de réclamer des reformes”.¹⁶⁶ Other CUP sympathizers in Diyarbekir were Pirinçizâde Sıdkı (Tarancı), Yasinzâde Şevki (Ekinci), his brother Yasinzâde Yahya (Ekinci), and Müftüzâde Şeref (Uluğ), among less prominent others.¹⁶⁷

The CUP’s policy towards the inhabitants of the eastern provinces varied between containment and repression. The day after the Kurdish revolt of Bitlis, on 4 April 1914, the Central Committee of the CUP convened to review its policy towards the eastern provinces. Mithat Şükrü (Bleda) pointed out that Russia was gradually tightening its grip on many Kurdish tribes in both the Ottoman Empire and Persia. According to him another danger were Armenian revolutionaries, who were awaiting the right opportunity to revolt and could at any time strike. He concocted a divide-and-rule strategy and maintained that on no account should Kurdish and Armenian politicians be allowed to unite. He suggested that the CUP should now adopt a more sophisticated stick-and-carrot strategy, enrolling potentially loyal chieftains through rhetoric and bribery, while threatening potentially disloyal chieftains with deportation and incarceration.¹⁶⁸

The assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand in Sarajevo on 28 June 1914 stirred up acute international tensions. In the midst of this belligerent atmosphere, the CUP sought to forge alliances with any of the Great Powers in order for the empire to emerge from its diplomatic isolation. Cavid Bey, the pro-British Minister of Finance, had appealed to Britain in 1911, but apart from Winston Churchill, the Foreign Office was not interested.¹⁶⁹ Talât flirted with Russia on his trip to the Crimea in May, where he spoke to the Russian Foreign Minister Sazonov about a possible alliance. The Russians expressed ambivalence in judgement but in essence were not interested.¹⁷⁰ Cemal Paşa approached France but left empty-handed, lamenting the negotiations with the French as “a huge disappointment” (*büyük bir hayal kırıklığı*).¹⁷¹ On 24 July 1914 a general mobilization was issued by the Ottoman general staff. On 28 July, the same day that Austria-Hungary declared war against Serbia, Enver Paşa proposed a defensive alliance between Imperial Germany and the Ottoman Empire to the German ambassador Wangenheim. In the next days Grand Vizier Said Halim, Chairman of the Parliament Halil, Enver, and Talât launched intensive negotiations with the Germans behind closed doors. Finally, on 2 August, one day after the German declaration of war against Russia, a written agreement was signed between the two

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p.480.

¹⁶⁷ Like CUP structures at the national level (see footnote 53), many of these people were related to each other: Aziz Feyzi was both Ziyâ Gökâlp’s and Şeref’s cousin, and Sıdkı was related to both of them on the maternal and paternal sides. Malmısanij, *Kürt Teavün* [n.154], p.41.

¹⁶⁸ Kamal Madhar Ahmad, *Kurdistan During the First World War* (London: Saqi, 1994, transl. Ali Maher Ibrahim), p.73.

¹⁶⁹ Martin Gilbert, *Winston S. Churchill*, vol.3: 1914-1916, *The Challenge of War* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1971), p.189.

¹⁷⁰ Sergej D. Sazonov, *Les années fatales: souvenirs de M. S. Sazonov, ancien ministre des Affaires Étrangères de Russie (1910-1916)* (Paris: Payot, 1927), p.182.

¹⁷¹ Cemal Paşa, *Hatıralar: İttihat ve Terakki ve Birinci Dünya Savaşı Anıları* (İstanbul: Çağdaş, 1977), p.141.

states.¹⁷² The discussions were top secret, and even Cemal Paşa had no knowledge of them.¹⁷³ Three days later Austria-Hungary joined the Turko-German alliance and completed the Central Powers bloc, whereas Russia, France and Britain united into the Entente Powers. The Ottoman Empire was now officially allied to Germany and on account of the treaty was inevitably obliged in this political constellation to prepare for war. Following the succession of declarations of war in August 1914, the Germans urged Minister of War Enver Paşa at the end of October to act against Russia. Without a formal declaration of war, Enver ordered the Ottoman navy to immediately bomb the Russian shore, destroying oil tanks and sinking 14 vessels.¹⁷⁴ Though few politicians in Istanbul knew of Enver's solo adventure, this *fait accompli* triggered declarations of war by the Triple Entente powers. From 11 November 1914 on, the Ottoman Empire was officially at war with Russia, France, and Britain.¹⁷⁵

World War I was nothing that incidentally happened to the Ottoman Empire. The CUP consciously headed towards a belligerent direction, and by participating in the war it hoped to radically solve the many problems of the Empire. From the first day of the war, its dictatorial rule became more repressive towards oppositional groups. Discordant behaviour was dealt with systematically and ruthlessly. On 6 September 1914 Talât ordered the Ottoman security apparatus to closely “follow and observe” (*takib ve tarassud*) the local leaderships of Armenian political parties who, according to Talât, had been engaging in “agitation and disturbance” (*mefsedet ve melanet*) against the notion of Ottomanism all along.¹⁷⁶ An other perceived problem were the foreign capitulations, a set of legal concessions under which foreign subjects enjoyed privileges, such as exemption of Ottoman taxes. The CUP regarded the capitulations as humiliating¹⁷⁷ and did not wait long to confront them: all capitulations were unilaterally abrogated on 17 September.¹⁷⁸ The CUP's bold policies did not only directly cause the ranks to close, it also led to an indirect form of turkification as government functionaries voluntarily left office. On 12 November, Minister of Commerce Süleyman Bustanî, a Syriac Protestant, resigned from his cabinet portfolio out of protest over what he considered ongoing CUP aggression.¹⁷⁹ This trend allowed the CUP to fill these administrative positions with nationalists.

Meanwhile, the mobilization did not go unnoticed in Diyarbekir province. The city streets swarmed with soldiers of the Second Army Corps, led by Ahmet İzzet Paşa, which was partly

¹⁷² For the eight articles of this treaty see: Şevket S. Aydemir, *Makedonya'dan Orta Asya'ya Enver Paşa* (İstanbul: Remzi, 1972), vol.2 (1908-1914), p.510.

¹⁷³ Cemal, *Hatıralar* [n.171], pp.142-43.

¹⁷⁴ Paul G. Halpern, *A naval history of World War I* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1994), p.76.

¹⁷⁵ John Keegan, *The First World War* (New York: Vintage, 1998), p.217.

¹⁷⁶ BOA, DH.ŞFR 44/200, Talât to provinces, 6 September 1914.

¹⁷⁷ In the parliament, CUP members had dubbed the capitulations “satanic angels”. *Meclisi Mebusan Zabıt Ceridesi*, 3rd election period, 4th sitting, 60th session, p.1028. In his memoirs Cemal Paşa confessed they wanted to “tear them apart”. Cemal, *Hatıralar* [n.171], p.438. The annulment of the capitulations “was received euphorically as a military success.” Tunaya, *Türkiye'de Siyasal Partiler* [n.57], vol.3, p.420.

¹⁷⁸ “İmtiyazat-ı Ecnebiyenin (Kapitülasyon) İlgası Hakkında İrade-i seniyye,” in: *Takvim-i Vekayi*, no.1938, 17 September 1914. Together with the capitulations, the reform plan for the eastern provinces Russia had designed in 1913 mainly to curb abuses against Christians, was also *de facto* cancelled. Roderic H. Davison, “The Armenian Crisis, 1912-1914,” in: *The American Historical Review* (1947), pp.481-505.

lodged in large mosques such as the Nebii Mosque.¹⁸⁰ On 3 November, the mayor of Diyarbekir held a public speech, explaining the conduct of the war to an exclusively Muslim crowd. Upon hearing that the Russian army was pushing into the provinces of Van and Erzurum, the frantic crowd yelled “Praise to Mohammed! Death to the Russians and their allies!” The non-Muslims of the city, frightened and cautious because of this outbreak of mass rage, did not leave their homes in the following days.¹⁸¹ The army began requisitioning goods from the population and drafting men into the army. Daniel Thom, a missionary in Mardin, summarized these acts and wrote that “the Govt. has robbed the city, and the country around, of its men, of its animals, of its money,” leaving the people “penniless, shops all closed”.¹⁸² Gradually, the Armenian elite of Diyarbekir was targeted and persecuted. Coinciding with his earlier order, on 29 November Talât ordered the arrest of Thomas Muggerditchian, the former interpreter of the British consulate in Diyarbekir. Muggerditchian was accused of espionage for the Entente Powers and would be sent to the court-martial.¹⁸³ He escaped arrest, fled to Egypt and subsequently wrote his memoirs.¹⁸⁴

From November 1914 on, the CUP began drawing up formations of irregular brigands in order to invade Russia and Persia to provoke war. This secret military organization was integrated into the existing ‘Special Organization’ (*Teşkilât-ı Mahsusa*).¹⁸⁵ The cadre of these new guerrilla bands (*çetes*) was to be made up of convicts, Kurdish tribesmen and Muslim immigrants, and were to be led by the same gangsters the CUP had used in the Balkan wars and in prior political competition. The convicts, named “savages and criminals” even by CUP officials,¹⁸⁶ were very often Kurdish tribesmen, or local outlaws and bandits who had committed crimes of theft or manslaughter. According to an Ottoman bureaucrat, they were drilled in Istanbul for one week before being deployed in various regions.¹⁸⁷ The entire operation was led by Dr. Bahaeddin Şakir and was kept out of control of the Ottoman army as much as possible.¹⁸⁸ On 18 November Talât personally ordered the drawing up of lists of names of “those convicts who were able to exert influence on tribes”.¹⁸⁹ A week later, the Special Organization was put together in Diyarbekir. Among the members enlisted in the paramilitary organization were the Zaza brigand Alo,¹⁹⁰ as

¹⁷⁹ Feroz Ahmad, “Unionist Relations with the Greek, Armenian, and Jewish Communities of the Ottoman Empire, 1908-1914,” in: Bernard Lewis & Benjamin Braude (eds.), *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire: The Functioning of a Plural Society* (New York: Holmes & Meier Publishers, 1982), vol.I: The Central Lands, p.424.

¹⁸⁰ Ali Emîrî, *Osmanlı Vilâyet-i Şarkîyesi* (İstanbul: Dâr-ul Hilâfe, 1918), p.34.

¹⁸¹ Ishaq Armalto, *Al-Qousara fî Nakabat an-Nasar* (Beirut: Al-Sharfe Monastery, 1970, 2nd edition). This detailed chronicle was written in 1919 in Arabic by the Syriac priest Ishaq Armalto and provides a very valuable account of Diyarbekir province before and during the war. The book has recently been translated into Swedish: *De Kristnas Hemska Katastrofer: Osmanernas och Ung-turkarnas Folkmord i norra Mesopotamien 1895 / 1914-1918* (Stockholm: Beth Froso Nsibin, 2005), translated by Ingvar Rydberg. This author has used an unofficial Turkish translation by Turan Karataş (Sweden, 1993), p.22.

¹⁸² Daniel Thom to William Peet, 16 August 1914, quoted in: Hans-Lukas Kieser, *Der verpasste Friede: Mission, Ethnie und Staat in den Ostprovinzen der Türkei 1839-1938* (Zürich: Chronos, 2000), p.336.

¹⁸³ BOA, DH.ŞFR 47/243, Talât to Diyarbekir, 28 November 1914.

¹⁸⁴ Thomas Muggerditchian, *Dikranagerdee Nahankê Tcharteru, Aganadesee Badmoutiun* (Cairo: Djihanian, 1919). This book is alternately titled *Dikranagerdee Nahankin Tcharteru yev Kurderou Kazanioutounneru* (Cairo, 1919).

¹⁸⁵ A. Mil, “Umumi Harpte Teşkilâtı Mahsusa,” in: *Vakit*, 2 October 1933 up to 18 April 1934, republished as: Arif Cemil (Denker), *I. Dünya Savaşı'nda Teşkilât-ı Mahsusa* (İstanbul: Arba, 1997).

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p.196.

¹⁸⁷ Ahmet Refik (Altınay), *Kafkas Yollarında: İki Komite, İki Kıtıl* (İstanbul: Temel, 1998 [1919]), p.157.

¹⁸⁸ Denker, *Teşkilât-ı Mahsusa* [n.185], pp.236-38.

¹⁸⁹ BOA, DH.ŞFR 47/70, Talât to provinces, 18 November 1914.

¹⁹⁰ *Tarihi Muhakeme* (İstanbul: Kitaphane-i Südi, 1919), p.14.

well as the Chechen criminal Hamid and his group of loyal warriors. Hamid was recruited by CUP Responsible Secretaries, who cabled the following notification to the Central Committee in Istanbul:

The courageous bandit Chechen Hamid, resident of the town of Reşadiye in the Bergama district, has requested help to assist the army with some of his comrades and if allowed, form a significant corps in Diyarbakir. Since we hope that aforementioned gentleman is able to serve in this way, their dispatch will benefit the homeland. We would like to request a telegraphic answer on whether their patriotic venture will be necessary or not, and present our compliments, dear brothers.¹⁹¹

During the winter of 1914, the brigands began penetrating into Russian and Persian territory to incite the Muslim populations to rise in rebellion and join the Ottoman forces. In this guerrilla war, Special Organization operatives such as Yenibahçeli Nail, Deli Halit, and Topal Osman, also attacked Armenian villages, plundering, raping, and killing with impunity. Ambassador Wangenheim wrote to the German Chancellor that their anti-Russian actions across the Erzurum border frequently escalated into “Übergriffen und Ausschreitungen” against Armenian villagers.¹⁹²

The war on the eastern front gained momentum when warmonger Enver Paşa, driven by expansionist designs towards the east, on 29 December attempted to attack the Russian army in Sarıkamış. Against all military advice from German and Ottoman strategists, Enver insisted on waging an encirclement campaign through the rugged Kars mountains. However, the Russian general Yudenich anticipated the outflanking manoeuvre, outsmarted Enver and delivered a heavy blow to his forces. Enver’s attack failed miserably, and as a result the Third Army was effectively wiped out. Of the 90,000 soldiers that engaged in the Sarıkamış battle, approximately 78,000 perished, mainly through frost.¹⁹³ The CUP leadership was convinced that the disastrous defeat had been caused by “treacherous Armenian elements”. Retreating Ottoman soldiers took revenge on Armenian villagers, massacring many and pillaging their goods. After returning from the front, Enver wrote a letter to the Armenian patriarch of Konya, expressing his respect and admiration for the courage the Armenian soldiers had shown in the Sarıkamış battle. Enver gave the example of sergeant Ohannes who had received a medal for valor.¹⁹⁴ This may not have been how Enver really felt. In a personal discussion with publisher Hüseyin Cahit, Enver bitterly blamed the Armenians for the fiasco and proposed their deportation to somewhere they wouldn’t cause trouble.¹⁹⁵ The defeat triggered a new wave of persecutions, especially in the front line provinces Erzurum, Bitlis, and Van. On 26 December 1914 Talât ordered “the dismissal of all

¹⁹¹ Quoted from internal CUP correspondence, 23 November 1914, quoted in: Tunaya, *Türkiye’de Siyasal Partiler*, [n.57], vol.3, p.349.

¹⁹² PAAA, R14085, Wangenheim to Bethmann-Hollweg, 29 December 1914.

¹⁹³ Edward J. Erickson, *Ordered to die: a history of the Ottoman army in the first World War* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2000), pp.51-74. For a detailed account of the Sarıkamış disaster see: Alptekin Müderrisoğlu, *Sarıkamış Dramı* (İstanbul: Kaştaş, 1997), 2 volumes.

¹⁹⁴ Lepsius, *Der Todesgang* [n.108], pp.161-2.

¹⁹⁵ Hüseyin C. Yalçın, *Siyasal Anılar* (İstanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 1976), p.233.

Armenian police officers, police chiefs, and government employees, and the deportation of anyone who opposes these measures.”¹⁹⁶ This official notice marked an acceleration in CUP suspicion towards Armenian loyalty to the Ottoman state.

For the population of Diyarbekir, there was little to celebrate between Christmas and New Year’s Eve 1914. The news of Enver’s losses reverberated in Diyarbekir and had a detrimental effect on the morale of the locals. The war was experienced closely and emotionally, since both Muslims and Christians had been drafted into the army, and many of them had perished in the Sarıkamış campaign. The bad news distressed the communities and strained their relationships, sparking suspicion and enmity. The Saint Ephraim church was vandalized and property was stolen, whereas gendarmes beat up a Syriac village headman.¹⁹⁷ The governor also prohibited the use of all non-Turkish languages in some of the province’s institutions, such as the American hospital or the French mission.¹⁹⁸ In February 1915 the government initiated arms searches in Christian houses in Diyarbekir. During these violent searches the inhabitants were accused of treason and espionage, and hiding guns in secret arms stores. On 18 February 12 young men of the large Syriac village of Qarabash were convicted to death under charges of alleged desertion. Four of them were hung publicly in the central square in Diyarbekir in order to deter potential deserters.¹⁹⁹ When their compatriot villagers protested against the execution, gendarmes clubbed two men to death and dispersed the group.²⁰⁰

March also saw the disarming of Armenian soldiers and their recruitment, together with many other Christian men, into labour battalions.²⁰¹ The cadre of these battalions were deemed disloyal elements, as an official decree proscribed them “at all costs” from taking up arms in the regular Ottoman army.²⁰² The labour battalion conscripts were deployed in road construction under dire circumstances in and around Diyarbekir. Irrespective of weather conditions, every individual, including teenagers, was forced to carry a daily load of 55 kilogram. They were escorted by two dozens of soldiers. Many conscripts in the labour battalions perished of exhaustion, exposure, and maltreatment. On 5 March 1915 a Syriac native of Diyarbekir, Abed Mshiho, was conscripted in a labour battalions numbering 1100 men, and assigned to work on

¹⁹⁶ BOA, DH.ŞFR 48/166, Talât to the provinces of Erzurum, Bitlis, and Van, 26 December 1914. Talât Paşa’s involvement in the dismissal of Armenian government officials typifies his qualities as a micro-manager. In February he urged local officials to keep him abreast of the developing situation with regards to the Armenian civil servants. BOA, DH.ŞFR 50/3, Talât to the provinces of Erzurum, Van and Bitlis, 14 February 1915. When he got the impression that the firing wasn’t proceeding quickly enough, he personally had police chief Krikor and police officers Armenag, Boghos, and Şahin of the Van police squad removed from their offices and deported to Mosul. BOA, DH.ŞFR 50/179, Talât to Van province, 6 March 1915. For the official declaration sanctioning the dismissal of all Armenian and Greek police officers see: BOA, DH.EUM.MEM 80/63, 21 November 1916.

¹⁹⁷ Armalto, *Al-Qousara* [n.181], pp.26, 27.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p.26.

¹⁹⁹ Abed Mshiho Na’man Qarabashi, *Vergoten Bloed: Verhalen over de gruweldaden jegens Christenen in Turkije en over het leed dat hun in 1895 en in 1914-1918 is aangedaan* (Glanerbrug, The Netherlands: Bar Hebraeus, 2002, translated by George Toro and Amill Gorgis), p.60. This important diary was originally written in Aramaic under the title *Dmo Zliho* (“Shed Blood”) by Na’man Qarabashi, a native of the village of Qarabash. During the war Qarabashi was a theology student at the Syriac monastery Deyr-ul Zaferan. Along with Armalto’s account it is one of the very few survivor memoirs.

²⁰⁰ Armalto, *Al-Qousara* [n.181], p.27.

²⁰¹ Raymond Kévorkian, “Receuil de témoignages sur l’extermination des amele tabouri ou bataillons de soldats-ouvriers Arméniens de l’armée Ottomane pendant la première guerre mondiale,” in: *Revue d’Histoire Arménienne Contemporaine*, vol.1 (1995), 289-303.

²⁰² See the official order in: Kâmuran Gürün, *Ermeni Dosyası* (Ankara: Bilgi, 1988), p.276.

the Diyarbekir-Aleppo road. According to his account, the maltreatments increased every other day, bastinado and other beatings becoming commonplace, the violence escalating in sporadic murders of individual conscripts by late March.²⁰³

March 1915 was perhaps the most fateful month for the future development of the Ottoman Empire in general and of Diyarbekir province in particular. The naval attacks upon the Dardanelles straits and the Russian move towards Van cast panic into the hearts and minds of the CUP leaders.²⁰⁴ This reinforced their established fear of a nightmare scenario in which potential Armenian disloyalty would pave the way for an Allied incursion into Anatolia. This ‘wishful suspicion’ led to a series of meetings of the Central Committee in Istanbul in mid-March. As a result of these gatherings, Dr. Bahaeddin Şakir was delegated substantial authority to deal with “the inner enemies”. The Special Organization was reorganized, expanded, and placed under his jurisdiction.²⁰⁵ The army was given more autonomy on Talât’s orders to “turn to the Third Army for the application of measures aimed at Armenian actions.”²⁰⁶ Four days later he imposed total censorship on the Armenian newspaper *Azadamest* and sent Osman Bedri, police commissioner of Constantinople, to confiscate their presses.²⁰⁷ This radicalization at the center metastasized into the periphery as Diyarbekir saw the appointment of its new governor: Dr. Mehmed Reşid.

2.2 The ‘reign of terror’ begins

On 25 March 1915 the governor of Diyarbekir, Hamid Bey, was relieved of his duty and replaced by Dr. Reşid. Mehmed Reşid (Şahingiray) was born in a Circassian family in Russian Caucasia on 8 February 1873. When the Tsarist government intensified its campaign against the Circassians in 1874, his family fled to the Ottoman Empire. Reşid grew up in Istanbul, where he enrolled in the Military School of Medicine and joined other students to found the kernel of a secret political party that would later adopt the name CUP. In 1897 the Abdulhamid regime exiled him to Tripoli for his politically recalcitrant activities. Having made career in the army and risen to the rank of major, he wrote a book on the CUP revolution in 1908. However, he was never influential in the CUP core and his power did not match up to that of party bosses Dr. Bahaeddin Şakir or Dr. Nâzım. In 1909 he relinquished his employment in the military and became district governor and mayor in several provinces between 1908 and 1914. During his professional path Reşid gradually radicalized and scapegoated the Christians as the reason for the Empire’s erosion and wretched condition. By 1914 he was thoroughly convinced that the Ottoman

²⁰³ Qarabashi names nine Armenians who were lead away and killed. Qarabashi, *Dmo Zliho* [n.199], pp.62, 64-66.

²⁰⁴ In case the Entente navy would penetrate the Straits, Talât promised they would blow up the Aya Sofia and retreat into the Anatolian heartland, from where they planned to resist and repel the Entente. Talât laughed at Morgenthau’s protests by saying that not even six men in the CUP would care about the building. Henry Morgenthau, *Ambassador Morgenthau’s Story* (Ann Arbor, MI: Gomidas, 2000), p.132.

²⁰⁵ For a detailed reconstruction of this decision-making process see: Taner Akçam, *İnsan hakları ve Ermeni sorunu: İttihat ve Terakki’den Kurtuluş Savaşı’na* (İstanbul: İmge, 2001), pp.260-65, especially p.264.

²⁰⁶ BOA, DH.ŞFR 51/15, Talât to the provinces of Erzurum, Van, and Diyarbekir, 14 March 1915.

²⁰⁷ Heinrich Vierbücher, *Armenien 1915: Die Abschachtung eines Kulturvolkes durch die Türken* (Bremen: Donat & Temmen Verlag, 1985 [1930]), p.49.

Christians were abusing their ostensibly privileged positions and therefore were to blame for the Empire's depressed economy. He was delegated the task of secretary-general of the international reform plan for the eastern provinces which was annulled when the CUP engaged in war. In 1915 he became governor of Diyarbekir and in 1916 he was appointed governor of Ankara. When the war was over, he was arrested and incarcerated in Istanbul. With the assistance of his former henchmen, he escaped from prison and lived incognito at various Istanbul addresses. Fed up with being forced to evade the law, and fearing arrest and possible execution, he committed suicide when a police chief tracked him down on 6 February 1919.²⁰⁸

When Reşid acceded to the governorship of Diyarbekir province, he brought with him 30 mainly Circassian Special Organization operatives, such as Çerkez Harun, Çerkez Şakir, and Çerkez Aziz.²⁰⁹ They were joined in Diyarbekir by more troops released from the local prison.²¹⁰ This way, Reşid absorbed more effective power than the average Ottoman governor. For Reşid, it was certainly true that “[i]n the provinces party bosses of one kind or another often exercised substantial control, amounting in some cases, [...] to virtual autonomy”.²¹¹ Upon arrival in Diyarbekir, Reşid and his men faced a poor rule of law, a serious desertion problem, and an anxious population. The bazaar, for example, was buzzing with rumors that the Russians had invaded Istanbul.²¹² The Muslims feared an invasion of Diyarbekir by the Russian army, whose reputation as a valiant fighting corps had preceded its offensive into the south. The Christians were torn between fear and hope: whereas one moderate group (such as the clergy) was terrified that a Russian incursion may trigger reprisals, an other, discordant group (such as nationalists) expressed audacious beliefs that it was possible to defend themselves against the brutal policies of the CUP dictatorship.²¹³

The concerns of many young men were of a pragmatic nature. They wanted to avoid the possibility of being conscripted into the Ottoman army and to be sent off to an almost certain death, at the front or in the labour battalions. Therefore, some had actually gone into hiding in the complex web of rooftops of Xançepek, a neighbourhood with a large concentration of Armenians. Some of these draft evaders had acquired weapons.²¹⁴ Dr. Floyd Smith, an American doctor of the *American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions* (ABCFM), witnessed that at the end of February, the Armenian bishop Tchilgadian finally “went upon the roofs and lectured the men, telling them that they were bringing ruin upon themselves and the whole Christian quarter.

²⁰⁸ Hans-Lukas Kieser, “Dr. Mehmed Reshid (1873-1919): A Political Doctor,” in: Hans-Lukas Kieser & Dominik J. Schaller (red.), *Der Völkermord an den Armeniern und die Shoah: The Armenian Genocide and the Shoah* (Zürich: Chronos, 2002), pp.245-80.

²⁰⁹ Mehmed Reşid, *Mülâhazât* (İstanbul, 1919), transliterated in: Nejdet Bilgi, *Dr. Mehmed Reşid Şahingiray'ın hayatı ve hâtıraları* (İzmir: Akademi, 1997), p.89, footnote 28. According to Abidin Nesimî, son of the then mayor of Lice, Hüseyin Nesimî, the number of volunteers Reşid employed was 20. Abidin Nesimî, *Yılların İçinden* (İstanbul: Gözlem, 1977), p.39.

²¹⁰ Yeghiayan, *British Foreign Office Dossiers* [n.152], p.151.

²¹¹ Alexander L. Macfie, *The End of the Ottoman Empire, 1908-1923* (London: Longman, 1998), p.128.

²¹² Armalto, *Al-Qousara* [n.181], p.28.

²¹³ *Ibid.*, p.28.

²¹⁴ Mustafa Â. Tütenk, *Mahsûl-i Leyâl-i Hayatım* (Diyarbakir, 1918, unpublished memoirs), fourth notebook titled “The Armenian Affair in Diyarbakir” (*Diyarbakir'de Ermeni Hâdisesi*), pp.21-23, quoted in: Beysanoğlu, *Diyarbakir Tarihi* [n.141], pp.787-88.

As a result quite a number surrendered.”²¹⁵ Still, there were a number of both Muslim and Christian deserters when Dr. Reşid became governor.

In a post-war booklet titled “Reflections” (*Mülâhazât*),²¹⁶ Reşid defended and sought to legitimize his wartime policies as governor of Diyarbekir. These memoirs, composed of two of his four wartime notebooks (the other two notebooks were lost), bear extraordinary importance as they allow a close look at his line of thought when he was appointed governor. From the moment he set foot in Diyarbekir, Reşid found confirmation of his prejudices of a conspiracy of disloyal Christians. He wrote:

My appointment to Diyarbekir coincided with a very delicate period of the war. Large parts of Van and Bitlis had been invaded by the enemy, deserters were transgressing, pillaging and robbing everywhere. Yezidi and Nestorian uprisings in or at the border of the province required the application of drastic measures. The transgressive, offensive and impudent attitude of the Armenians was seriously endangering the honor of the government.²¹⁷

In his memoirs Reşid especially targeted the Armenians. He accused them of “high treason” (*hıyânet-i vataniye*) and of “pursuing the goal of an independent Armenia” (*miistakil bir Ermenistan gayesini takib*).²¹⁸ In his paranoia and animosity Reşid ignored the many Muslim deserters, and imagined an army of Armenian deserters whereas they may not have been as countless and organized as he visualized. He believed that the Armenian draft dodgers on the rooftops were all “formidably” (*müdhiş*) organized revolutionaries, and that their amount numbered more than one thousand. Moreover, according to Reşid “there was not a single Armenian in the province that was not participating in this national endeavour”.²¹⁹

In order to deal with these perceived problems, Reşid organized a committee for the “solution of the Armenian question”. This council was named “Committee of Inquiry” (*Tabkik Heyeti*) and had its own “Militia Unit” (*Milis Alayı*) at its disposal.²²⁰ According to a German charity worker the committee, drawn up of a dozen CUP loyalists, was “ein Scheinkomitee zur Lösung der armenischen Frage” and served only one purpose: to eliminate the Henschak and Dashnak parties.²²¹ It was headed by Colonel Mustafa Bey (Cemilpaşazâde), and consisted of deputy Aziz Feyzi, postal clerk İbrahim Bedreddin,²²² Majors Rüşdü Bey and Yasinzâde Şevki

²¹⁵ Floyd Smith to James Barton, 18 September 1915, *ABCFM Archives*, Houghton Library (Harvard University), ABC 16.9.7, reel 716:436, quoted in: Kieser, “Dr. Mehmed Reshid” [n.208], p.264.

²¹⁶ The booklet was alternately titled “Persistence” (*Sebat*).

²¹⁷ Reşid, *Mülâhazât* [n.209], p.24.

²¹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp.95, 99.

²¹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp.103, 106.

²²⁰ Süleyman Nazif, “Doktor Reşid,” in: *Hadisat*, 8 February 1919. It is possible that the establishment of these provincial committees was an empire-wide undertaking. There is evidence that in other provinces similar organizations were set up. *Yale University Library*, Ernst Jäckh Papers, file 49, folio 1354, “Anlage Abschrift”.

²²¹ PAAA, R14087, director of the Deutscher Hilfsbund für christliches Liebeswerk im Orient (Frankfurt am Main) Friedrich Schuchardt to the Auswärtiges Amt, 21 August 1915, enclosure no.6.

²²² On 2 September 1914 İbrahim Bedreddin (Bedri for short) became the postal clerk of Diyarbekir province. Previously he had held this office in Basra and Mosul. After the defeat of the Balkan wars of 1912-’13, he had coordinated the CUP-sponsored deportation of the Ottoman Greeks of Biga (a town between Çanakkale and Bursa). On 12 September 1915 he was officially appointed district governor of Mardin, which he remained until 11 December 1916. On 24 January 1917 he was assigned to the governorship of Diyarbekir, which he occupied until 24 November 1918. Yeghiayan, *British Foreign Office Dossiers* [n.152], pp.69-70.

(Ekinci), his brother Yasinzâde Yahya (Ekinci), İAMM representative and director of the Diyarbakir branch of the 'Society for National Defense' Veli Necdet, police chief Memduh Bey, militia commander Şevki Bey, and Şeref Uluğ (son of the müftü).²²³ On orders of Reşid they selected the following civilians and appointed them Captain: Zazazâde Hacı Süleyman (a Zaza butcher by profession in the Diyarbakir bazaar), Halil (a butcher as well), Cercisağazâde Abdülkerim, Direkçizâde Tahir, and Piriñçizâde Sıdkı (Tarancı). The following volunteers were nominated Lieutenant: Halifezâde Salih, Ganizâde Servet (Akkaynak), Muhtarzâde Salih, Şeyhzâde Kadri (Demiray), Pirânizâde Kemal (Önen), Yazıcızâde Kemal, Zaza Alo Efendi, and Hacı Bakır.²²⁴

At that time, a certain Hacı Zeki of Lice, a fanatic activist incited the locals of Mardin to take up arms against the Christians. Zeki convened groups of Muslims at his house in Mardin city where he held inflammatory political speeches, openly calling for pogroms. The district governor of Mardin, a moderate man by the name of Hilmi, was displeased by Zeki's aggressive vilification. Since the outbreak of the war Hilmi had been showing consistent efforts to restrain conflict, and maintain relative stability and moderate rule. He reprehended Zeki and expelled him from Mardin. Zeki then took off to Diyarbakir where he found willing partners among the CUP elite that were just consolidating their rule in the provincial capital.²²⁵ On 6 April 1915 Talât ordered Reşid to "appoint a capable, loyal, and devout İttihadist for the vacant position of mayor" in Diyarbakir.²²⁶ Reşid immediately fired the relatively mild Cemilpaşazâde Dr. Fuad Bey and replaced him with the rabidly anti-Armenian Sıdkı.²²⁷ Police chief Dersimli Hüseyin Bey was replaced by İAMM boss Veli Necdet, who had previously had occupied the office of provincial secretary.²²⁸ All the key positions in Diyarbakir were now occupied by CUP loyalists.

In Diyarbakir, Reşid now embarked on a relentless campaign to find and punish deserters. On 1 April he issued a proclamation demanding the surrender of all arms to the police.²²⁹ When this failed to produce the results he had expected, he brutalized the arms searches from 5 April on. Aided by his gendarme commander, Major Rüşdü, he personally supervised and participated in the warrantless searches of churches and houses.²³⁰ Whereas district governor Hilmi in Mardin visited the Christian clergy to congratulate them on Easter,²³¹ Reşid's roundups of Armenian men became more and more arbitrary and categorical. As he wrote: "On a certain day I had the 3 or 4 most important streets in the Armenian neighbourhood barricaded and ordered surprise searches

²²³ A *müftü* (mufti) is a Muslim jurist who is versed in Islamic religious law (the *shari'a*) and provides binding advice on its application.

²²⁴ Beysanoğlu, *Diyarbakir Tarihi* [n.141], pp.793-94; Bilgi, *Dr. Mehmed Reşid* [n.208], pp.26-27. See also: Joseph Naayem, *Shall this nation die?* (New York: Chaldean Rescue, 1921), pp.182-83. Reverend Naayem was a Chaldean priest of Urfa, where he witnessed the killing of his father and the persecution of the Christians. Disguised as a Bedouin Arab, he narrowly escaped with his life.

²²⁵ Armalto, *Al-Qousara* [n.181], pp.29, 34.

²²⁶ BOA, DH.ŞFR 51/220, Talât to Diyarbakir, 6 April 1915.

²²⁷ Reşid, *Mülâhazât* [n.209], p.112. Right after the appointment of Sıdkı, a wave of violence swept over the labour battalions as two supervisors came to inspect the workers, yelling "You're not here to play, come on, I want to see blood on those rocks!" Qarabashi, *Dmo Zliho* [n.199], p.65.

²²⁸ Yeghiayan, *British Foreign Office Dossiers* [n.152], p.48.

²²⁹ Floyd Smith to James Barton, 18 September 1915, quoted in: Kieser, "Dr. Mehmed Reshid" [n.199], p.265.

²³⁰ Qarabashi, *Dmo Zliho* [n.195], pp.63.

on every single house in the early morning, arresting more than 500 armed deserters”.²³² By 15 April Reşid had already had more than 600 Armenian notables and artisans arrested and put in jail. There he had them tortured to exact confessions on the locations of hidden arms depots. The prisoners were beaten, burnt with hot irons, had their nails pulled out with pliers, and suffered prolonged bastinado.²³³ Even so, Reşid was not satisfied with what had been accomplished and wired Istanbul twice to request the deployment of more manpower to assist his force of 300 gendarmes and policemen. The Interior Ministry did not comply with his requests, frustrating and galvanizing him into more severe measures.²³⁴

A peculiar aspect of the operation was the hunt for “recalcitrant” books and other texts, generally written in non-Ottoman languages. In CUP jargon this material was branded “harmful documents” (*evrâk-ı muşırre*) and needed to be confiscated.²³⁵ As Floyd Smith wrote: “Books and papers were sure to bring condemnation to a household.”²³⁶ On 22 April Reşid’s men went from door to door in the Xançepek and Fatihpaşa neighbourhoods to find books. The Syriac tailor Habib had warned the inhabitants to hide their books, especially books in the French and Armenian languages. The militia also paid a visit to the Armenian bishop Tchilgadian and accused him of hiding arms in secret niches in the large Armenian church St. Sarkis. They raided his room, took away all his books and documents, and sent them to Reşid for examination. The next days the books were burnt publicly.²³⁷ Vahram Dadrian was a young boy when he was deported with his family from Çorum. After many trials and tribulations they arrived in the Syrian desert and met an Armenian man named Pakrad who had just escaped from Diyarbekir. Pakrad related them that his father Abraham got caught up in the books searches. A corporal took two of their books and walked out, facing a frantic crowd of Muslims:

The corporal gestured to the crowd to shut up. “Listen! Look here. Look what we found in his home,” he yelled, lifting a geography book into the air. “You don’t know how to read, so you don’t know how dangerous this book is. But I won’t have to say much before you can draw your own conclusions. In the hands of our enemies this book is a more terrifying weapon than all the guns and cannons of the army. This book gives the locations of all the cities, villages, rivers, and roads in Turkey. All of them meticulously portrayed. Anybody who goes through this book can find not only the plan of every city, but also the location of every house and whether it belongs to a Christian or a Muslim. They have marked each one with a cross or a crescent, so that one day when they rebel it will be easy for them to tell a Muslim

²³¹ Armalto, *Al-Qousara* [n.170], p.29.

²³² Reşid, *Mülâhazât* [n.201], pp.105.

²³³ Qarabashi, *Dmo Zliho* [n.195], p.127. Fa’iz Al-Ghusayn, an Ottoman bureaucrat hailing from Damascus, was arrested for his opposition against the CUP and put in the Diyarbekir prison, where he witnessed the tortures inflicted on the Armenian notables. He later fled to Bombay and wrote his memoirs in Arabic. Fa’iz Al-Ghusayn, *Martyred Armenia* (London: C.A. Pearson Ltd., 1917).

²³⁴ Reşid, *Mülâhazât* [n.201], pp.103, 104.

²³⁵ In World War I, the CUP confiscated and destroyed an unknown but undoubtedly large number of non-Turkish language works. A striking example is the fate of the books at library of the Armenian school of Sivas. In October 1916 Talât was disturbed by the idea that the library kept “important volumes on the condition of the Ottoman Empire in French, German, English, Russian, and Kurdish,” and ordered “the immediate seizure of these books and their dispatch to Istanbul by post.” *BOA*, DH.ŞFR 69/75, Talât to Sivas province, 23 October 1916. Five months later, when the books still weren’t sent, he repeated his order, requesting the books to be sent “urgently”. *BOA*, DH.ŞFR 76/243-14, Talât to Sivas province, 24 May 1917.

²³⁶ Floyd Smith to James Barton, 18 September 1915, quoted in: Kieser, “Dr. Mehmed Reshid” [n.208], p.264.

²³⁷ Armalto, *Al-Qousara* [n.181], p.29. Patriarch Rahmani, *Les dégâts causés à la nation syrienne* (présenté devant la conférence de la paix, 1919).

household from the others.” Grumbling from the mob – arms into the air in defiance! “Oh, oh, oh... clobber him, kill him, let him rot, the traitor.” “Please, calm down. Not so fast,” the corporal ordered with authority, “I haven’t finished yet. Look. Here’s an other book.” He held up an other book – a physics text. “It tells you all you need to know about how to make gun-powder, bullets, and dynamite. These conspirators’ homes are filled with books like this. Both the young and the old read these books and learn what to do to destroy our country. But thank God and the Sultan that we have been vigilant and were able to uncover their plot at the last minute. Now it’s *we* who will destroy *their* homes and put *their* children to the sword.” The policemen had a hard time clearing a way through the violent crowd. They finally succeeded and, pulling and pushing their victim, they took him off to jail.²³⁸

Pakrad’s father Abraham died in jail, where chances of escape or survival were very slim. As the city prison was now swarming with prisoners, Reşid ordered the large caravanserai of Diyarbekir evacuated. Every day several dozens of prisoners were locked up and tortured in that khan.²³⁹

The violent persecutions were not limited to Diyarbekir. In April a gradual shift occurred from discerning between combatants and non-combatants, to not discerning between them anymore. This momentum is exemplified by the crucial battle of Van, which had very high stakes for all parties. The Van front saw mutual indiscriminate massacring of Muslims by the joint Russo-Armenian forces and of Christians by Ottoman forces.²⁴⁰ The anti-Armenian measures at the national level now became more and more categorical as well. Moreover, inspired by the brutalizing war in Persian Azerbaijan and in Transcaucasia, they were also gaining ‘total’ traits: more and more violence was applied. Fear of Allied landings on the western coasts added fuel to the fire. As a result, the CUP began incarcerating dissidents and assailing the Armenian community all over the Ottoman Empire. Beginning on 24 April 1915, the political and cultural elite of the Ottoman Armenian community was targeted for arrest and deportation to the interior. With very few exceptions, these men were tortured to death in the next months. Simultaneously, deportation convoys to the interior were rerouted to Der el-Zor in the Syrian desert. The persecutions soon increased in intensity and were extended to larger parts of the Ottoman Empire.²⁴¹

In Diyarbekir, Reşid had not been distinguishing at all ever since he arrived. His intensive arms searches of the first three weeks of April had delivered some results for his militia as many arms were found. The scope of armament and the extent of its organization were blown out of proportion and photos were taken of the arms and the culprits.²⁴² On 27 April Reşid wired an elated telegram to Talât summarizing and evaluating his work in Diyarbekir:

²³⁸ Vahram Dadrian, *To the Desert: Pages from my Diary* (London: Gomidas Institute, 2003), pp.64-65.

²³⁹ Qarabashi, *Dmo Zliho* [n.199], pp.82, 128. This famous caravanserai, a large inn providing shelter to travelling businessmen or pilgrims, was also known as “guest house” (*misafirhane*) or simply “khan” (*han*) and is presently known as the Deliller Hanı near the Mardin Gate. After restoration in the 1990s, it became the 5-star Hotel Kervansaray.

²⁴⁰ Anahide Ter Minassian, “Van 1915,” in: Richard G. Hovannisian (ed.), *Armenian Van/Vasporakan* (Costa Mesa, CA: Mazda, 2000), pp.209-44.

²⁴¹ Donald Bloxham, “The Beginning of the Armenian Catastrophe: Comparative and Contextual Considerations,” in: Kieser, *Der Völkermord* [n.208], pp.101-28.

²⁴² Beysanoğlu, *Diyarbekir Tarihi* [n.141], p.789. A similar method was applied in Mardin, where Memduh Bey had been sent. Ara Sarafian, “The Disasters of Mardin during the Persecutions Of The Christians, Especially the Armenians, 1915,” in: *Haigazian Armenological Review*, vol.18 (1998), p.263.

For ten days, the pursuit of deserters has been carried out with utmost severity. As a result of yesterday's purges a significant amount of explosives, fifty bombs, lots of ammunition and various arms, and a great deal of dynamite powder was found. 120 leaders and operatives of the villages were taken into custody. Until now, only in the city more than 1000 deserters of different regions were apprehended, many of whom are party members. Searches and pursuit are continuing.²⁴³

Having incarcerated the bulk of the political elite of the Diyarbekir Christians, Reşid's militia now targeted their religious leaders. Blanket arrests of priests and monks were carried out and their houses were ransacked. In Mardin, where Reşid's persecutions had not yet started, the news from Diyarbekir nevertheless caused fear. The Armenian Catholic Bishop Ignatius Maloyan had become anxious about the worsening situation and seems to have written a letter to his coreligionists, in case something would happen to him. Maloyan urged his parish to remain calm and loyal to the government, and wrote: "Above all, never lose your faith in the holy trinity." The letter was sealed and entrusted to the Syriac Orthodox Bishop Gabriel Tabbuni on the first of May.²⁴⁴

While the war was raging in all intensity on the eastern front, the CUP began questioning the loyalty of the Ottoman Armenians even more. On 5 May 1915 Talât authorized the Third Army to disarm all Armenian gendarmes in Diyarbekir.²⁴⁵ This way, even loyal Armenians were categorized as disloyal and treated as such. The next day the Directorate for Employment and Supplies of the Ministry of Economy ordered all its offices to fire their Armenian staff and "deport those of whom it is necessary to areas where there are no Armenians".²⁴⁶ After Reşid had already arrested these men in Diyarbekir, he proceeded to persecute the city's clergy and extend the arrests to the villages. On 9 May he summoned the Chaldean priest Hanna Soha in Mardin to come to Diyarbekir for interrogation. Upon arrival, the militia publicly maltreated him before killing him in broad daylight in the streets.²⁴⁷ The absence of constraints in his murder emboldened the militia and triggered a new wave of arrests and violence, this time targeting the surrounding villages as well. The predominantly Christian villages Kabiye, Qarabash, and Qatarbel, all situated on the plain of Diyarbekir, were subjected to brutal arms searches by Yasinzâde Yahya and Pirinççizâde Sıdkı between 10 and 20 May. The village men were tortured with bastinado, and dozens were taken away to the capital, filling the prison and the

²⁴³ Reşid to Talât, 27 April 1915, quoted in: Hüsametdin Yıldırım, *Rus-Türk-Ermeni Münasebetleri (1914-1918)* (Ankara: KÖK, 1990), p.57.

²⁴⁴ Armalto, *Al-Qousara* [n.181], p.30.

²⁴⁵ BOA, DH.ŞFR 52/234, Talât to Reşid, 5 May 1915.

²⁴⁶ BOA, DH.ŞFR 52/249, 6 May 1915, Ministry of Economy to the provinces of Erzurum, Bitlis, Van, Sivas, Mamuret-ul Aziz, and Diyarbekir. Since there were no other educated clerks available, Syriac employees Aziz (son of Yakub) and George Meqdesi Nano of the Diyarbekir office of the Ministry of Economy were allowed to continue their work. The director of this office, Saib Ali Efendi, protected these two secretaries all throughout the war. Armalto, *Al-Qousara* [n.181], p.33. Most Armenian civil servants had already been fired and replaced by Muslims at that time. Some were still in office at the Ministry of Post. On 23 May this Ministry too took action, and ordered the dismissal of all its Armenian clerks and the transfer of the vacant functions to "trustworthy Muslims" (emin ve müslim kimselere). BOA, DH.ŞFR 53/89, Ministry of Post to the provinces of Diyarbekir, Adana, Sivas, Ankara, Van, and Erzurum, 23 May 1915. For Haleb see: BOA, DH.ŞFR 53/90. The day after, the Ministry had to deal with the replacement of the Armenian postal clerk responsible for the deliverance of post between Diyarbekir and Siirt. Although there were no other qualified employees available, it warned that the appointment of the new postal clerk should in no way be an Armenian. BOA, DH.ŞFR 53/97, Ministry of Post to Bitlis, 24 May 1915.

caravanseraı.²⁴⁸ German charity worker Schuchardt wrote: “zwischen dem 10. und 30. Mai wurden weitere 1200 der angesehensten Armenier und anderen Christen ohne Unterschied der Confessionen aus dem Vilajet Diarbekir [...] verhaftet”.²⁴⁹ Reşid then imposed a death penalty on any Armenian going outside the city walls.²⁵⁰ Diarbekir had become an open-air prison.

The persecutions also spread into the countryside, most notably Mardin city, which was still ruled by Hilmi Bey, who had stalled and resisted anti-Christian persecutions in his district. On 15 May Reşid sent Aziz Feyzi to organize the round-up of the Christian elites of Mardin. During a secret meeting in which tens of Muslim notables participated, a plan was laid out for the crack-down on the Mardin elite. However, this was practically impossible because of Hilmi being in office.²⁵¹ Talât was still busy micro-managing the national persecution of the Armenian political elite. On 19 May he ordered Henschak leader Paramas court-martialled in the Diarbekir prison and inquired on the whereabouts of Krikor Nalbandian.²⁵² On the 22nd he requested information on Agnoui, Rupen Zartarian, and their colleagues.²⁵³

A critical event in Diarbekir was the first large massacre involving the integral destruction of entire village populations. On the morning of 20 May 1915 Reşid ordered Yahya and Sıdkı to disarm Qarabash, a village shortly northeast of Diarbekir. The village was invaded with 50 men and thoroughly disarmed, seizing even bread knives. Its men incarcerated, its weapons confiscated, Qarabash was now completely emasculated. That same evening Yahya and Sıdkı visited the neighbouring Kurdish villages, inciting them to attack Qarabash and explicitly giving them fiat to plunder. Two days later, on 22 May, the village was invaded by mounted Kurds, who massacred its population with daggers, axes, and swords. Its two priests, Paulus and Behnam, were trampled to death under the hooves of the horses. The women were raped, the houses were burnt, and valuables were seized.²⁵⁴ The few survivors fled to Diarbekir, where some of them were treated by Floyd Smith. Smith reported the arrival of the Qarabash survivors as follows:

May 21, 1915, there came to our compound in Diarbekir from the village of Karabash, three hours to the east, three or four wounded and the following day (May 22) over a score of wounded Armenian and Syrian women and children. They, the villagers, told of a night attack by the Kurds three days previous and that the next morning the government had sent gendarmes who refused to allow anyone to come to Diarbekir. Some managed to get away and finally all who could walk or be carried came on the dates mentioned. The wounds were practically all infected and I have classified them as follows: [...]

(c) Wounds made by heavy cutting instruments, probably axes. [...]

²⁴⁷ Armalto, *Al-Qousara* [n.181], p.32.

²⁴⁸ Qarabashi, *Dmo Zliho* [n.199], pp.81, 86, 92.

²⁴⁹ PAAA, R14087, director of the Deutscher Hilfsbund für christliches Liebeswerk im Orient (Frankfurt am Main) Friedrich Schuchardt to the Auswärtiges Amt, 21 August 1915, enclosure no.6.

²⁵⁰ National Archives, RG 59, 867.4016/77, Morgenthau to Secretary of State, 20 July 1915 (enclosure no.3), in: Ara Sarafian (ed.), *United States Official Records on the Armenian Genocide 1915-1917* (London: Gomidas Institute, 2004), p.103.

²⁵¹ Armalto, *Al-Qousara* [n.181], p.33.

²⁵² BOA, DH.ŞFR 53/58, 19 May 1915, Talât to Reşid.

²⁵³ BOA, DH.ŞFR 53/74, 22 May 1915, Talât to Reşid.

²⁵⁴ Qarabashi, *Dmo Zliho* [n.199], p.81.

2. Two children about seven and nine years and one woman; attempted decapitations. Deep incised wounds of the nape of the neck (just below the skull), 5-8 inches long and of a depth equal to the thickness of the muscles of this region.²⁵⁵

On that same evening, the 160 families of the village of Kabiye were targeted.²⁵⁶ The terrified villagers, comprised of some remaining men but mostly women, children, and the elderly, had taken refuge in the Mor Kiryakos church. Sıdkı had persuaded Ömer, Mustafa, and Emîn, three sons of Perîxan, matriarch of the Reman tribe (see page 29), to cooperate in the raid. They had brought with them dozens of tribesmen, who combed the village for hemp rope to tie the men together. On orders of Sıdkı the men were tortured with hot iron pins, while women and girls were raped in the church. Within five hours, the militia and the tribesmen had hacked the villagers to death with axes. Many were crammed into haylofts and barns and burnt alive. After the massacre, the Reman brothers loaded two saddle bags of money and gold and carried the goods away.²⁵⁷ The few survivors escaped to Diyarbekir, where some were killed after all by gendarmes. One survivor stated that she survived the massacre “between the corpses of her relatives” (*men bayn lashat herbo*). When she fled to Diyarbekir city, a Zaza family proposed to take her into their home, but she refused out of fear. An other survivor, a boy, had escaped death by hiding in a vinyard, which was overgrown by that time of the year. He was the only male survivor of the Kabiye massacre.²⁵⁸

In April, some Armenians had already sporadically been deported from their native regions, though this was not an empire-wide campaign. The deportation of the entire Armenian *millet* was officially organized from 23 May 1915 on, when Talât issued orders for the integral deportation of all Armenians to Deyr-ul Zor, starting with the northeastern provinces.²⁵⁹ That same day he urged the Fourth Army Command to court-martial any Muslim who collaborated with Christians.²⁶⁰ The Third Army had been put under command of General Mahmud Kâmil Paşa,²⁶¹ who had issued a similar order. His orders instructed “any Muslim who protected an Armenian hanged in front of his house, the burning of his house, his removal from office, and his

²⁵⁵ American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM) Archives, Houghton Library (Harvard University), ABC 16.9.7, vol.25d, document 485, Floyd Smith to James Barton, 20 September 1919, quoted in: James Barton (ed.), *Statements of American Missionaries on the Destruction of Christian Communities in Ottoman Turkey, 1915-1917* (Ann Arbor, MI: Gomidas Institute, 1998), p.92.

²⁵⁶ In the 1960s, Professor of Semitic languages Otto Jastrow travelled to Diyarbekir and Beirut to conduct several very valuable interviews with survivors from many villages. Jastrow uploaded these recordings to an online archive (<<http://semarch.uni-hd.de/>>) and transcribed them in both Aramaic, Arabic, and German. For the Kabiye massacre see: Otto Jastrow (ed.), *Die mesopotamisch-arabischen Qəltu-Dialekte* (Wiesbaden: Kommissionsverlag Franz Steiner GmbH, 1981), vol.II, *Volkskundliche Texte in Elf Dialekten*, pp.309-71.

²⁵⁷ According to Qarabashi the amount of money stolen was 150 pounds. Qarabashi, *Dmo Zliho* [n.199], p.89.

²⁵⁸ Jastrow, *Die mesopotamisch-arabischen* [n.256], p.310. Many survivors of the Christian villages of the plain fled to the city but were not received with open arms. Survivors and scared villagers came pouring into the churches. A survivor girl related that upon arrival at the Syriac Mother Mary church, she was chased away at the door by a Syriac Orthodox priest, who cursed at her and did not even give her a morsel of bread. *Ibid.*, pp.324-25. According to the son of an Armenian survivor from the village of Satıköy, this priest was B'shero Abu Tuma, who had also been forced by Reşid to act as an informer and betray houses where Armenians were hidden. Interview with David Krikorian (aged 75) from Satıköy village (Diyarbekir province), conducted in Turkish in Amsterdam on 16 December 2004.

²⁵⁹ BOA, DH.ŞFR 53/91, 53/92, and 53/93, Talât to provinces, 23 May 1915. This is the single instance in which the empire-wide nature of the deportations are reflected in one order at the most central level.

²⁶⁰ BOA, DH.ŞFR 53/85, Talât to Cemal Paşa, 23 May 1915.

²⁶¹ On 12 February 1915 Mahmud Kâmil replaced General Hafız Hakkı, who had died in a spotted typhus epidemic. Erickson, *Ordered to die* [n.193], p.104.

appearance before a court-martial.”²⁶² These massive arrests and persecutions prompted the Entente Powers to announce a joint declaration on 24 May, denouncing CUP policies against the Armenians. The declaration vehemently criticized these “new crimes of Turkey against humanity and civilization” and promised “that they will hold personally responsible [...] all members of the Ottoman government and those of their agents who are implicated in such massacres”.²⁶³ The CUP leaders, especially Talât, panicked and attempted to disguise the deportations, requesting permission from the Grand Vizier on 26 May to issue a temporary deportation law. Although the deportations had already begun, the Grand Vizier endorsed Talât’s law on the 29th, rushing the bill through parliament the next day. This legal cover was the official inception of the deportation of Armenians to the Syrian desert, authorizing the army to proceed with this *fait accompli*, delegating its daily implementation to the İAMM.²⁶⁴

2.3 ‘Burn, destroy, kill’

At this stage, moral thresholds were crossed both on the national and provincial level. Talât had assumed supervision and therefore responsibility of a very risky operation: the deportation of an entire population. The murderous initiations on the plain of Diyarbekir too, had crossed a boundary as entire village populations were now targeted for destruction. The relationship between these two developments remain a chicken-and-egg enigma. However, it is possible to reconstruct at least some elements of this momentum. Rafael de Nogales Mendez was a Venezolean officer in German duty, serving in the Ottoman army as a mercenary. In the spring of 1915 he had witnessed the massacres against Christians in Van and Bitlis, committed by Halil Paşa and Tahir Cevdet Bey.²⁶⁵ He visited Diyarbekir late June and had the opportunity to speak to Reşid in private. According to Nogales, Talât had personally ordered Dr. Reşid to unleash hell on Diyarbekir with a telegram containing a mere three words: “Burn - Destroy - Kill” (*Yak - Vur - Öldür*). Although this order was most probably destroyed (assuming it existed at all), there was clearly no instruction for Reşid to desist. Moreover, Reşid admitted himself that he had merely obeyed Talât’s order, who seemingly had confided to him: “j’assume la responsabilité morale et matérielle”.²⁶⁶ Reşid interpreted the order as connivance of his policy, characterized by American consul Jesse Jackson as a “reign of terror”.²⁶⁷

²⁶² *Takvim-i Vekâyi*, no.3540, p.7.

²⁶³ PRO, FO 371/2488/51010, 28 May 1915; *National Archives* RG 59, 867.4016/67, 29 May 1915.

²⁶⁴ BOA, MV 198/163, 30 May 1915.

²⁶⁵ Halil (Enver Paşa’s uncle) and Cevdet (Enver’s brother-in-law) swept through Van and Bitlis after their defeats on Persian territory and in Van. During their retreat, they massacred the Armenian inhabitants of Bitlis, Van, and the plain of Muş. For an eyewitness account see: Grace Knapp, *The Tragedy of Bitlis* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1919).

²⁶⁶ Rafael de Nogales, *Four Years Beneath the Crescent* (London: Sterndale Classics, 2003), p.125. This book was first published in Spanish as *Cuatro años bajo la media luna* (Madrid: Editora Internacional, 1924), later published in German as: *Vier Jahre unter dem Halbmond: Erinnerungen aus dem Weltkrieg* (Berlin: Verlag von Reimar Hobbing, 1925). See also his: *Memorias del General Rafael de Nogales Méndez* (Caracas: Ediciones Abril, 1974).

²⁶⁷ *National Archives*, RG 59, 867.4016/77, Jackson to Morgenthau, 5 June 1915, in: Sarafian, *United States* [n.250], p.84.

Content with the results in Diyarbekir plain and emboldened with Talât's approval, Reşid had Feyzi conduct arms searches in Mardin on 24 May. These were equally brutal and categorical as those carried out in the previous month in Diyarbekir. The next day he took it a step further and ordered Hilmi Bey to arrest all Christian notables in Mardin. Hilmi refused by answering he could not think of any reason why he should carry out arrests in his city and openly disobeyed his superior's order. Nevertheless, Feyzi sidestepped bureaucratic protocols and proceeded with the persecutions, backed by a group of Muslim notables and the militia. Together they incarcerated dozens of Christians in Mardin.²⁶⁸ The persecutions also spread to the northern parts of the province, which were closer to Kharput, capital of Mamuret-ul Aziz province. Reverend Henry Riggs, a missionary in that city, wrote to the American ambassador Morgenthau that the Armenian pastor of Çüngüş (Tchungkoush) had "died a violent death in prison there." The same fate had befallen preachers in Hani and Lice.²⁶⁹

By the end of May, the entire Christian elite of Diyarbekir was in prison, where some had already died under torture. Dr. Reşid administered the *coup de grace* to the elite in the last week of that month. On Sunday 25 May 1915 Major Rüşdü cuffed 807 notables including Bishop Tchilgadian, and lead them through the Mardin Gate. On the shores of the Tigris the men were loaded on 17 large Tigris rafts (*keleks*)²⁷⁰ under the pretext that they would be deported to Mosul. Militiamen accompanied the notables on the rafts as they sailed one hour downstream to the "intersection of two rivers" (*seré du avê*), a violent torrent where the Batman creek joins the Tigris. This area was the home of the notorious Reman tribe, south of Beşiri. At this gorge, Major Rüşdü had all rafts moored by the left bank of the river and ordered the Christians to write reassuring letters to their families in which they were compelled to write that they were safely underway to Mosul. The men were then stripped of their clothes and valuables and massacred by Rüşdü's men. In carrying out the hands-on killing the militia was assisted by Kurdish tribesmen loyal to Reman chieftain Ömer, who had been induced by Aziz Feyzi. All men were slaughtered and dumped in the river, with the exception of Bishop Tchilgadian, who was forced to witness the bloodbath as a form of psychological excruciation before being lead back to Diyarbekir.²⁷¹ After the massacre, Ömer and Mustafa were invited to Aziz Feyzi's house, where they celebrated their accomplishment. The men were later received at the governorship, where Reşid congratulated them for their bravery and patriotism.²⁷² Reşid also appealed to the Interior Ministry to have his militia promoted and awarded medals for their outstanding performances.

²⁶⁸ Armalto, *Al-Qousara* [n.181], p.33.

²⁶⁹ *National Archives*, RG 59, 867.4016/77, Morgenthau to Secretary of State, 25 May 1915, in: Sarafian, *United States* [n.250], p.35.

²⁷⁰ According to Yusuf Halaçoğlu, these rafts were called *Shahtur*. Yusuf Halaçoğlu, "Realities Behind the Relocation," in: Türkkaya Ataöv (ed.), *The Armenians in the Late Ottoman Period* (Ankara: Turkish Historical Society, 2001), p.117. Halaçoğlu ignores the fact that the Armenians loaded on these rafts never arrived anywhere, but were robbed, put to the sword and drowned.

²⁷¹ Qarabashi, *Dmo Zliho* [n.199], p.128.

²⁷² *Épisodes des massacres arméniens de Diarbakir: Faits et Documents* (Constantinople: Kéchichian Fr., 1920), pp.28-30.

His wish was granted by the Directorate for General Security and the militia received financial benefits and was decorated with medals.²⁷³

On the 30th of May the ritual was repeated with 674 Christians and 13 rafts. This time, the murder was supervised by Veli Necdet and 50 militiamen. On arrival at the Reman gorge the victims were robbed of a total of 6000 Turkish pounds and stripped of their clothes. They were killed and thrown in the river as Ömer's tribesmen and the militia lined up on both banks with their guns. Those that managed to swim and emerge to the surface were shot dead. Back in Diyarbekir, the militiamen sold the expensive clothing they had taken from the victims on the market.²⁷⁴ Among those killed were Onnik Kazazian, a wholesaler from Istanbul who happened to visit Diyarbekir, and his friend Artin Kassabian, the former interpreter of the French vice consulate. Other victims were the noted bankers Khatchadur Dikranian and Tirpandjian.²⁷⁵ The same fate befell Mihran Basmadjian, graduate of the Euphrates College in Kharput, Dikran Chakidjian, and Nalband Hagop, all of them Dashnakists, as well as Hagop Ovasapian, the negotiator Stephan Matossian, the former provincial interpreter and secondary school teacher Dikran Ilvanian, member of the municipal council and representative of Singer Missak Shirikdjian, all of them members of the Ramgavar party.²⁷⁶ To the dismay of Holstein, the German vice consul of Mosul, a week later the rafts arrived empty. Holstein had found out that the Christian convoys had been "entirely slaughtered" (*sämtlich abgeschlachtet*) and had witnessed their corpses floating downstream: "seit einigen Tagen treiben Leichen und menschliche Glieder im Fluß hier vorbei".²⁷⁷

Bishop Tchilgadian had been forced twice to watch how his parish was slaughtered. Although Ambassador Wangenheim later reported to Chancellor Bethmann-Hollweg that "[d]er armenische Bischof von Diarbekir soll aus Verzweiflung Selbstmord begangen haben," this was certainly not true.²⁷⁸ After the second massacre he was lead back to Diyarbekir, where he was ordered to sign a written declaration that the murdered Armenians had died of natural causes.²⁷⁹ When he refused he was thrown into prison, where he was tortured to death. His teeth were knocked out, his beard was pulled out, he was forced to squeeze boiled eggs in his palms, and his eyes were gorged out. In the meantime, his wife was raped by several militiamen before being slaughtered.²⁸⁰ Finally, a large nail was hammered through Tchilgadian's head before he was burnt

²⁷³ BOA, DHEUM.MEM 67/31, 27 July 1915. Deputies Aziz Feyzi and Zülfü Bey, and militia Major Şevki were decorated with honorary medals for their "great achievements". BOA, DH.KMS 43/10, 11 January 1917. According to a British intelligence report, "Deputy Feyzi was received by the Kaiser and decorated with the Iron Cross". Foreign Office 371/4172/24597, no.63490, folio 304.

²⁷⁴ PAAA, R14087, director of the Deutschen Hilfsbundes für christliches Liebeswerk im Orient (Frankfurt am Main) Friedrich Schuchardt to the Auswärtiges Amt, 21 August 1915, enclosure no.6; Lepsius, *Todesgang* [n.108], pp.75-76.

²⁷⁵ Report of M. Guys to the French embassy, Istanbul, 24 July 1915, in: in: Arthur Beylerian (ed.), *Les grandes puissances, l'empire ottoman et les arméniens dans les archives françaises (1914-1918): recueil de documents* (Paris: Université de Paris I, Panthéon-Sorbonne, 1983), p.48, document no.58; Yeghiayan, *British Foreign Office Dossiers* [n.152], p.48; Krikorian, *Armenians* [n.107], pp.24-25.

²⁷⁶ *Épisodes des massacres* [n.272], pp.22-23.

²⁷⁷ PAAA, Botschaft Konstantinopel 169, Holstein to Wangenheim, 10 June 1915.

²⁷⁸ PAAA, Botschaft Konstantinopel 169, Rößler to Wangenheim, 29 June 1915; R14086, Wangenheim to Bethmann-Hollweg, 9 July 1915.

²⁷⁹ National Archives, RG 59, 867.4016/77, Morgenthau to Secretary of State, 20 July 1915 (enclosure no.3), in: Sarafian, *United States* [n.250], p.103.

²⁸⁰ Vierbücher, *Armenien 1915* [n.207], pp.61-62.

to ashes in front of the Melek Ahmed mosque by officer Resul Hayri Bey. The other priests and monks were strangled to death with thick ropes. All of this happened on orders of Aziz Feyzi.²⁸¹

After the elimination of the Armenian elite of Diyarbekir, Reşid quickly expanded the violence to genocidal proportions. Having massacred the bulk of the male elite, the rest of the Diyarbekir Armenians were now targeted. On 1 June he had his militia evacuate 1060 Armenian men and women of the Armenian neighbourhood Xançepek and escort them to the Diyarbekir plain through the Mardin Gate. The people were gathered and a proclamation was read out loud, offering the Armenians their lives in exchange for conversion to Islam. Although the decision was not unanimous, the victims refused, whereupon they were stripped of their clothes and belongings. The militia and local Kurdish villagers then massacred them with rifles, axes, swords, and daggers. Many women were raped, some were sold as slaves. The corpses were either thrown in wells or trenches, or left on the plain to rot, “the men on their stomachs, the women on their backs.”²⁸² It did not take long for Talât to issue the following deportation order for the Diyarbekir Armenians: “All Armenians living in villages and towns of the province, will be resettled to Mosul, Urfa and Zor, with no exceptions. Necessary measures will be taken to secure their lives and property during the deportation”.²⁸³ At the same time, the İAMM ordered the “documentation of the names and places of the Armenian villages, the number of deportees, and the abandoned property and plowland”.²⁸⁴

İAMM agent for Diyarbekir Veli Necdet was charged with implementing Talât’s orders. The remaining Armenians were to be deported to the south and consisted mainly of women, children, and the elderly. One day after her father was tortured to death by Reşid’s militiamen, Aghavni Kassabian, daughter of a noted Armenian merchant, was deported with her family:

Turkish gendarmes came to our house in the morning and told us that we were going to be put on a deportation march. We were given little time to gather a few things that we could pack on a donkey. We gathered silverware, some clothes, two rugs, a Bible, soap, some family photographs. We packed as much food and water as we could, but we expected to be able to buy food when we needed more. We hid some jewels on our bodies, and each had an allotment of money. [...] By noon we joined a long line of Armenians and were marched down the streets to the Citadel Gardens, where we met up with thousands of Armenians. Some had donkeys, some had ox-drawn carts, and most were on foot carrying packs and small children and infants. The gendarmes began cracking the whip and we began to move in a big mass toward the New Gate from where I could see a long snakish line of Armenians moving around the city walls going south. We were marched out past the Citadel and around the black city walls wavering in the heat. By the end of the day, we were sleeping on the ground somewhere on the flat, hard plateau. The tributaries of the Tigris cut ravines into the limestone ridges, and in their flanks were occasional huts built out of the rock, where Kurds lived. There was nothing but dry ground and sky and limestone ridges. Nothing.²⁸⁵

²⁸¹ Dadrian, *To the Desert* [n.238], p.66; Qarabashi, *Dmo Zliho* [n.199], p.129; Yeghiayan, *British Foreign Office Dossiers* [n.152], p.48; *Épisodes des massacres* [n.272], p.26-28; Interview with David Krikorian [n.258].

²⁸² Edward W.C. Noel, *Diary of Major E. Noel on Special Duty in Kurdistan* (Basra: n.p., 1919), part 1, pp.10-11.

²⁸³ BOA, DH.ŞFR 54/87, Talât to the provinces of Trabzon, Mamuret-ul Aziz, Sivas, Canik, and Diyarbekir, 21 June 1915.

²⁸⁴ BOA, DH.ŞFR 54/15, İAMM to the provinces of Adana, Haleb, Erzurum, Bitlis, Van, and Diyarbekir, 14 June 1915

²⁸⁵ Peter Balakian, *Black Dog of Fate: A Memoir* (New York: BasicBooks, 1997), pp.217-18.

On the fifth day of the deportation, Aghavni's mother had gone delirious and died of exhaustion. On the sixth day, all of their possessions were gone, either depleted or stolen by gendarmes. One night she was raped by a gendarme. Hunger, thirst, murder, and exhaustion had dramatically reduced the number of deportees by the time her convoy had reached the desert. Aghavni herself was abducted by a Kurdish nomad and bore him two children, before she escaped to the remainder of her extended family in the United States.²⁸⁶ Those that were marched further into the desert often did not even make it to Rakka. A German named Greif, living in Aleppo, reported that the convoys of Diyarbekir Armenians were nearly reduced to non-existence in the desert. He wrote that "many raped female corpses were laying around naked" (*geschändete Frauenleichen massenhaft nackt herumlagen*), and added the following detail: "Viele von ihnen hatte man Knüttel in den After hineingetrieben".²⁸⁷

The Ottoman deportation apparatus had already depopulated the Armenian settlements of the northeastern regions of the Empire by late June. Scores of deportees arrived at Diyarbekir, which was designated by the İAMM as one of the hubs where the Armenians were to be concentrated. From there on they were deported to the south. However, in practice the city was often the final destination for many deportees. Reşid's militiamen and Kurdish villagers robbed and massacred them often before they reached the city gates. At the end of July, a convoy from Kharput arrived in Diyarbekir. An eyewitness summarized their fate as follows:

In Diarbekir angekommen, bekamen sie einfach nichts zurück, blieben einen Tag in Diarbekir und mussten die nächste Nacht weiterreisen. Dort war es, wo junge Frauen und Mädchen von Offizieren und Gendarmen entführt wurden. Als sie aus Diarbekir herausreisten, kam der Offizier, der sie bis dorthin begleitet hatte, mit einigen Gendarmen und suchte sich mehrere hübsche junge Mädchen und Knaben aus und liess die übrigen mit 6 - 7 Gendarmen zurück, er selbst ging mit seiner Beute davon. Auf dem Weg nach Mardin nahmen die Gendarmen den Ausgewiesenen ihre wenigen Habseligkeiten, ihr bischen Brot und die wenigen übrig gebliebenen Schmucksachen weg.²⁸⁸

Aurora Mardiganian was a little girl when she was deported from Erzurum. On arrival in Diyarbekir she witnessed the slaughter of a convoy and the disposal of their bodies:

In the meantime the Jews of Diyarbekir had come out from the city, driven by gendarmes, to gather up the bodies of the slain Armenians. They brought carts and donkeys with bags swung across their backs. Into the carts and bags they piled the corpses and took them to the banks of the Tigris, where the Turks made them throw their burdens into the water. This is

²⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, pp.218-23.

²⁸⁷ PAAA, R14093, Das Geheime Zivil-Kabinet des Kaisers (Valentini) an den Reichskanzler (Bethmann Hollweg), 10 September 1916, enclosure no.3.

²⁸⁸ PAAA, R14087, Rößler to Bethmann-Hollweg, 3 September 1915, enclosure no.4 (23 August 1915). An other eyewitness related: "Als wir nach Diarbekir kamen, wurden alle unsere Lasttiere abgeführt und eine Frau und zwei junge Mädchen von den Gensdarmen weggeschleppt. 24 Stunden lang sassen wir im Sonnenbrand vor den Mauern vor Diabekir. Aus der Stadt kamen Türken und nahmen uns unsere Kinder weg. Gegen Abend hatten wir uns zum Aufbruch bereit gemacht, als wir von Türken, die aus der Stadt kamen, angegriffen wurden. Da liessen wir alles, was wir noch an Gepäck hatten, im Stich und stoben auseinander, um unser Leben und unsere Ehre zu retten. In der Nacht wurden wir noch dreimal von Türken angegriffen und die Mädchen und junge Frauen weggeschleppt." PAAA, R14093, Das Geheime Zivil-Kabinet des Kaisers (Valentini) an den Reichskanzler (Bethmann Hollweg), 10 September 1916, enclosure no.6.

one of the persecutions the Jews were forced to bear. The Mohammedans did not kill them, but they liked to compel them to do such awful tasks.²⁸⁹

Those that did manage to slip through the murderous meshes in Diyarbekir either committed suicide or were seized from the convoys and absorbed into Muslim households.²⁹⁰ The Syriac monk Qarabashi witnessed the deportation of a convoy of several thousands of Armenians heading to Mosul. Between Diyarbekir and Mardin he discovered a naked 10-year old Armenian girl who had become orphaned in the preceding massacres. Deeply disturbed, Qarabashi fed the emaciated girl bread, cheese, yoghurt, and a pickle. He decided she had to hide in the bushes near the Tigris, for if she was found by militiamen she would certainly be murdered. When he returned the next day to check up on her, she was dead.²⁹¹ A couple of days later Qarabashi met three Armenian women in a nearby Kurdish village. The women had been deported from Sivas and Erzincan and were serving as slaves in the household of a Kurd named Sufi Hasan. When one of her became ill, Sufi Hasan took her away and shot her dead.²⁹² In several instances, local authorities or gendarmes sold entire convoys to Kurdish tribesmen for sums ranging between 500 to 1000 pounds. The tribesmen, aware of the fact that the Armenians had brought along many movable assets, would then strip the clothes from their backs and either leave the deportees to die or kill them outright.²⁹³

The massacres and deportations quickly spread out into the province. Whereas the Circassian militiamen were sent to the north of the province, Aziz Feyzi and Memduh Bey were assigned the south. This division of labour may have fluctuated somewhat since Reşid deployed his militia wherever and however he saw fit. Reşid removed the mayor of Çermik, Mehmed Hamdi Bey, for not obeying his orders to destroy the Armenians living in his district.²⁹⁴ Talât later approved Reşid's replacement of the mayor of Maden by Dr. Osman Cevdet (Akkaynak).²⁹⁵ After the dismissal of the mayors the evacuation of the Armenian villages and neighbourhoods of Maden commenced. At first, the 35 richest families of Maden were ordered to mobilize for deportation, followed by the rest of the Maden Armenians, many of whom were miners. They were given very little time to prepare, and on the first day of deportation the men were selected and incarcerated in the large caravanserai of Maden. The convoy was then marched off to Urfa

²⁸⁹ Aurora Mardiganian, *The Auction of Souls* (London: Phoenix Press, 1934), pp.173-74. This survivor memoir, first published in 1918 under the title *Ravished Armenia: The story of Aurora Mardiganian, the Christian girl who lived through the great massacres* (New York: Kingfield, 1918), has recently been re-translated into Dutch: André Boeder, *Door het oog van de naald: Het verhaal van Aurora, een Armeens meisje* (Houten: Den Hertog, 2003).

²⁹⁰ Ara Sarafian, "The absorption of Armenian women and children into Muslim households as a structural component of the Armenian genocide," in: Omer Bartov & Phyllis Mack (eds.), *In God's Name: Genocide and Religion in the Twentieth Century* (Oxford: Berghahn, 2001), pp.209-21.

²⁹¹ Qarabashi, *Dmo Zliho* [n.199], pp.73-74.

²⁹² *Ibid.*, p.76.

²⁹³ Armalto, *Al-Qousara* [n.181], p.68.

²⁹⁴ This quarrel continued during Reşid's Ankara governorship, when Reşid wired to Hamdi: "The chaos and anarchy in Sungurlu reminds me of your mayorship in Çermik I would prefer to forget. You should have remembered how you were dismissed from there. This telegram bears the quality of last warning. If you continue rule with anarchist administrative customs and harm the government's prestige and honour, your dismissal as in Çermik is as sure as death." Reşid to Hamdi, 9 December 1916, quoted in: *Tasvir-i Efkar*, 14 January 1919.

²⁹⁵ BOA, DH.ŞFR 55-A/186, Talât to Reşid, 9 September 1915.

via Diyarbekir. In the process, the supervising officer stole 300 pounds from them and stripped them of many private belongings.²⁹⁶

The Ergani-Maden district was a station for deportees arriving from Kharput, north of Maden. When a convoy of 1500 people arrived in Ergani after a march of 4 days, the officer in charge selected the men, ostensibly to work in the mines. All men above the age of 11 were taken away to the caravanserai, where they joined the native Maden Armenians.²⁹⁷ The bulk of these men were not employed in the mines, but pushed over the edge of the Maden cliff into its deep ravine. This must have happened at least before 7 July, when Mariza Kejejian, a deportee from Kharput witnessed “heaps of corpses” (*Leichenhaufen*) on the road between Maden and Ergani.²⁹⁸ Three months after the massacre, Mary Riggs, a missionary working in Kharput, was allowed to travel south and saw “unmistakable signs of horrible cruelty”. Riding through the Maden gorge, Riggs looked down the canyon and saw “countless naked bodies in positions showing how they had been hurled from above.”²⁹⁹ Four years later, Gertrude Bell visited the same khan where the Armenian men had been held. A Chaldean carpenter in that khan “described his escape from Mardin and showed me behind the Khan a deep grave where hundreds of Armenians were buried”.³⁰⁰

The destruction of the Maden Armenians equalled the destruction of the Maden economy, since the copper mines were rid of almost all of its miners. Whereas Rafael de Nogales wrote around 26 June that “the Argana-Maden mines continued normally,” it did not take long for this to change.³⁰¹ By the late summer, the Austrian general Josef Pomiankowski travelled through the region and lamented that because of the elimination of the Armenians “wird das unschätzbare Erzlager von Argana nicht exploitiert, ist verlassen und liegt brach”.³⁰²

The genocide struck the adjacent region between Lice and Piran (renamed Dicle in the Republic) around mid-June. The mayor of Lice, Hüseyin Nesimi Bey, had refused to implement Reşid’s orders to persecute the Armenians of Lice. When Reşid intensified the violence, he orally communicated an order to Nesimi to murder the Armenians of Lice. Shocked by this explicit murderous desire, the mayor refused and demanded the order in writing.³⁰³ Reşid ran out of patience, removed him from office and sent Çerkez Harun to murder the disobedient mayor. Nesimi was taken from his home and escorted to Diyarbekir but was shot dead on the way by his

²⁹⁶ PAAA, R14087, Rößler to Bethmann-Hollweg, 3 September 1915, enclosure no.4 (23 August 1915).

²⁹⁷ PAAA, R14087, Rößler to Bethmann-Hollweg, 3 September 1915, enclosure no.4 (23 August 1915).

²⁹⁸ PAAA, R14093, Das Geheime Zivil-Kabinet des Kaisers (Valentini) an den Reichskanzler (Bethmann Hollweg), 10 September 1916, enclosure no.6.

²⁹⁹ Mary W. Riggs, “The Treatments of Armenians by Turks in Harpoot” (10 April 1918), in: Barton, *Statements* [n.255], p.33, Inquiry Document no.III.

³⁰⁰ GBA, diary entry for 21 October 1919.

³⁰¹ Nogales, *Four years* [n.266], p.124.

³⁰² Joseph Pomiankowski, *Der Zusammenbruch des Ottomanischen Reiches: Erinnerungen an die Türkei aus der Zeit des Weltkrieges* (Wien: Amalthea-Verlag, 1928), p.210.

³⁰³ PAAA, R14087, director of the Deutscher Hilfsbund für christliches Liebeswerk im Orient (Frankfurt am Main) Friedrich Schuchardt to the Auswärtiges Amt, 21 August 1915, enclosure no.6: “Der Kaimakam von Litsche hat die durch einen Boten des Walis mündlich überbrachte Ordre die Armenier umzubringen, zurückgewiesen mit dem Bemerken, er wünsche den Auftrag schriftlich zu haben.”

company and buried by the roadside.³⁰⁴ The assassination did not go unnoticed and Reşid was asked about Nesimi's whereabouts,³⁰⁵ but ignored the request. The question was reiterated a month later in a tone indirectly accusing Reşid of the murder. The Interior Ministry wrote: "It is contended by the family of the ex-mayor of Lice, Hüseyin Nesimi Bey, that he was assassinated. Please report whether he was murdered in the line of duty".³⁰⁶ Reşid gave an affirmative answer but claimed that a "notorious Armenian brigand" had put Nesimi to death.³⁰⁷

With the elimination of the mayor Reşid had obviated the most important obstacle for his objective: the destruction of the Lice Christians. He sent İbrahim Bedreddin to supervise the killings in Lice. The men were arrested, tied together with rope, lead away to a cave named *Gobê Gumbo*, stripped of their belongings, and finally had their throats slit.³⁰⁸ "So many ropes were required for the work that a public crier gave orders that the townspeople were to provide a stipulated quantity." At the same time, the villages of Lice were targeted. One by one, the villages were surrounded by the militia and Kurdish tribesmen, either some hours after dark or at daybreak. The village of Henne, a village of four hundred Christian families, was invaded and rid of its male population within a day. After the militia had finished the men they returned to the village, where the terrified women had assembled together in houses. They were raped, deported, or left to die in hunger and misery. Similar events took place in the villages of Fûm, Şimşim, Cûm, Tappa and Naghle.³⁰⁹ The vacant position for mayor in Lice was occupied by İlyas Nuri Bey, who left the Armenians alone and allowed them to recover from the massacres.³¹⁰ A number of Christian families converted to Islam to survive the genocidal persecution and indeed managed to live in Lice for several decades before migrating to Diyarbakir city, Istanbul, or Western Europe.³¹¹

The example of Lice was to be a model for other parts of the province. The genocide took on recurrent systematic procedures. Reşid ruthlessly and purposefully eliminated any opposition to the genocide. In July he had his Circassian henchmen Aziz and Şakir assassinate the vice mayor of Beşiri, Ali Sabit El-Suweydî in a manner similar to Hüseyin Nesimi.³¹² After Sabit was eliminated, Reşid's militia and the Reman chieftains razed the Beşiri valley and massacred the Armenians and Syrians in that region. This time, Talât personally requested information on the

³⁰⁴ Hüseyin Nesimi's son wrote in his memoirs that his family was very much aware of the fact that Nesimi had been assassinated by Reşid's men. Abidin Nesimi, *Yılların İçinden* (Istanbul: Gözlem, 1977), pp.39-46.

³⁰⁵ BOA, DH.ŞFR 56/361, Directorate for Employment to Diyarbakir, 12 October 1915.

³⁰⁶ BOA, DH.ŞFR 58/46, Directorate for Employment to Diyarbakir, 17 November 1915.

³⁰⁷ Reşid, *Mülâhazât* [n.209], pp.86-87.

³⁰⁸ "Filehên Licê," in: Amed Tigris, *Lice* (Stockholm: unpublished forthcoming book, 2005), pp.40-44.

³⁰⁹ Naayem, *Shall this nation die?* [n.224], pp.199-207. The killings in the neighbouring Piran district were routinely cruel. In that region elderly Kurds remember morbid but vivid anecdotic information from villagers who had participated in the massacres. According to them, the perpetrators would assail the villages and dispatch of their victims by slashing their throats wide open. As they operated with axes, this often lead to decapitations. After the killing was done, the killers saw that the insides of the victims' windpipes were black because of prolonged use of tobacco. Interview conducted with Ş. family (Hani district) in Kurdish in Diyarbakir, 15 July 2004.

³¹⁰ Reşid, *Mülâhazât* [n.209], p.84.

³¹¹ Interview conducted with an anonymous Armenian family (Lice district) in Dutch in Amsterdam, February 2003.

³¹² Reşid, *Mülâhazât* [n.209], pp.83 footnote 20, 89-90.

murders of Nesimi and Sabit.³¹³ However, no form of litigation followed against Reşid, who continued his work with ever more zeal. He dismissed the mayor of Savur, Mehmed Ali Bey, an opportunist who had profited from the persecution against the Christians. Allegedly, Mehmed Ali was also involved in a series of gambling and sex scandals, nota bene in the holy month of Ramadan.³¹⁴ The next official to be deposed was İbrahim Hakki Bey, mayor of Silvan. According to Reşid, he “distributed Armenian women here and there, stole Armenian property, and exempted Armenians from deportation in exchange for money”.³¹⁵ After his dismissal, Reşid appointed Adil Bey, brother of deputy Zülfü Bey, as mayor of Silvan. The militia then cooperated with the local Kurdish chieftain Sadık Bey to carry out the killings in the Silvan district.³¹⁶

An even worse fate befell the mayor of Derik, who had refused to carry out Reşid’s genocidal order, demanding a direct order from Istanbul. The mayor was killed for his opposition to the persecutions of the Christians in his district. Reportedly Reşid personally went to inspect Derik, delegating the persecution to Halil (son of İbrahim Paşa) and Hidayet Bey. This triggered a wave of incarcerations, tortures, and summary executions.³¹⁷ Finally, the militia, headed by Tevfik Bey, began massacring the Christians of Derik, they targeted the Yezidis too. A noted Yezidi chieftain was decapitated and several Yezidi families in Derik were forced to convert to Islam.³¹⁸ In Derik, the Kurdish chieftains Seyid Ağa and Zülfikar Bey of Khirar village protected the Armenians and Yezidis in the village.³¹⁹ Those who could escape made for the caves northeast of Derik, but Reşid sent his loyal militia leader Çerkez Harun to massacre remaining Christians in the district.³²⁰

After these dismissals and political assassinations, the last mayor still to be resisting the genocidal violence to penetrate into his district was the mayor of Midyat, Nuri Bey. Reşid first attempted to have Nuri removed by appealing for a legal inquiry about his ‘negligence’ towards the Armenians. Reşid later claimed that Nuri had not been dealing adequately with an alleged Armenian uprising in Midyat, and wrote that the Armenians were targeting the Muslims with “the organization of quite a terrible massacre” (*gâyet müdhiş bir katliâm tertibâtı*).³²¹ Although this was a rather dubious assertion, Reşid still used this pretext to recommend Halil Edib, criminal judge of Mardin, for Nuri’s position. However, the Ministry refused twice and stated that there was no need to replace Nuri as he had not acted irresponsibly or incompetently as a mayor.³²² An inquiry

³¹³ BOA, DH.ŞFR 54-A/117, Talât to Reşid, 27 July 1915.

³¹⁴ BOA, DH.ŞFR 57/97, Directorate for Employment to Diyarbakir, 24 October 1915.

³¹⁵ Reşid, *Mülâhazât* [n.209], pp.83-84, footnote 22.

³¹⁶ Interview conducted with Meçin family (Silvan) in Turkish in Ankara, 19 June 2004.

³¹⁷ Armalto, *Al-Qousara* [n.181], p.81.

³¹⁸ Interview conducted with Temel family (Derik) in Kurdish in Bremen, 21 March 2002.

³¹⁹ Noel, *Diary of Major E. Noel* [n.282], p.8.

³²⁰ Jacques Rhétoré, *Les chrétiens aux bêtes! Souvenirs de la guerre sainte proclamée par les Turcs contre les chrétiens en 1915* (unpublished manuscript, Bibliothèque du Saulchoir), pp.43-44. Rhétoré was a Catholic priest who was in Mardin until 1915. The text has been translated to Italian in: Marco Impagliazzo (ed.), *Una finestra sul massacro: Documenti inediti sulla strage degli armeni (1915-1916)* (Milano: Guerini, 2000), and recently published in French as: Jacques Rhétoré, *Les chrétiens aux bêtes! Souvenirs de la guerre sainte proclamée par les Turcs contre les chrétiens en 1915* (Paris: Editions du Cerf, 2005).

³²¹ Reşid, *Mülâhazât* [n.209], p.85.

³²² BOA, DH.ŞFR 54-A/300, Directorate for Employment to Diyarbakir, 7 August 1915.

was started anyway,³²³ but when it did not produce the rapid results Reşid had expected, he resorted to violence once again. Nuri was assassinated and Midyat too was deprived of opposition against the violence.

An other center of violence was the northern district of Palu. Of the over 300 villages in Palu, 48 contained an Armenian presence. The other villages were mainly inhabited by Kurds and Zazas, and many villages were mixed.³²⁴ According to one survivor, the violence engulfed the Palu villages on a day when the sun was eclipsed (10 August 1915), evoking images of apocalyptic doom among the Armenian villagers.³²⁵ As in other districts of Diyarbekir province, the *modus operandi* was first to immediately kill the men and then deport the rest. The Armenian male population of Palu town were taken to the bridge over the Murad river, had their throats slashed, and were thrown in the river. Garabed Farshian, an Armenian boy who was orphaned, was taken to a Turkish village and saw that “il y avait du sang dans le fleuve”.³²⁶ A recurrent action in the villages was the requisitioning of rope to tie the men together and lead them away. As Noyemzar Khimatian-Alexanian of Baghin village remembered: “The soldiers went from house to house asking for rope. After that they took the males, 15 and older and collected them. They used the rope to tie their hands. The men and teen-aged boys were taken to a distant field and stabbed to death”.³²⁷ In an other village, the militia rode in and collected all men into the church. The men and the boys came back out with their hands tied behind them. They were taken away to the banks of the Murad river and butchered with long knives.³²⁸ The militia then carried off pretty women and children for personal use, and did not hesitate to throw babies in the river to drown.³²⁹ Finally, the decimated convoy was deported to the south. Some were able to escape the convoys by bribing officers or villagers, or by giving their children to benevolent local families. For example, the little girl Heranush Gadarian from Habab village was given to an Ottoman corporal and assimilated in his extended family.³³⁰

The very few Armenian men that were still alive by this time, were those working in labour battalions. On 1 April 1915 the Interior Ministry ordered the Third Army to draw up a labour battalion consisting of 4000 men.³³¹ A week later, the Ministry of War issued an other decree, ordering the conscription of more men in order to cope with the shortage. This time, it was authorized to enlist even women into labour battalions.³³² From 27 May on, the practice of

³²³ BOA, DH.ŞFR 57/167, Directorate for Employment to Diyarbekir, 28 October 1915.

³²⁴ George Aghjayan, “The Armenian Villages of Palu: History and Demography,” paper presented at the conference *UCLA International Conference Series on Historic Armenian Cities and Provinces: Tigranakert/Diyarbakir and Edessa/Urfa*, University of California (Los Angeles), 13 November 1999, p.2.

³²⁵ Interview with Antanik Baloian, unpublished manuscript titled “Antanik Baloian’s Story,” by Nelson Baloian.

³²⁶ Vahé Mamas Kitabdjian (ed.), “Récit de Garabed Farchian, né à Palou en 1906 ou 1907,” reproduced in: Ternon, *Mardin 1915* [n.142], p.287.

³²⁷ Interview with Noyemzar Khimatian-Alexanian by Linda J.P. Mahdesian.

³²⁸ Interview with Katherine Magarian, as “Voices of New England: Katherine Magarian,” in: *Boston Globe*, 19 April 1998, p.B10.

³²⁹ Interview with Margaret Garabedian DerManuelian by George Aghjayan in Providence, RI, February 1990.

³³⁰ Heranush’s story was related to her granddaughter Fethiye Çelik, who attempted to trace her Armenian relatives and found them in the United States. Fethiye Çelik, *Anneannem* (İstanbul: Metis, 2004).

³³¹ BOA, DH.ŞFR 51/186, Ali Münif (Directorate for General Administration) to Diyarbekir, 1 April 1915.

³³² BOA, DH.ŞFR 51/231, Ministry of War to Diyarbekir, 8 April 1915.

“quittance” (*bedel*), ensuring exemption from conscription was prohibited by Talât.³³³ The battalions became a death trap to the conscripts as malnutrition, exhaustion and exposure had already begun to decimate their numbers. However, the greatest threat to their physical existence were not these hardships but outright massacres, perpetrated by their Ottoman superiors. On the Palu-Diyarbakir road, 1200 conscripts were massacred on 1 June.³³⁴ A week later 160 men working in the labour battalions near Diyarbakir city were taken to the Devil’s Gorge (*Şeytan dere*) and battered to death by Sıdkı and Yahya. On 5 July another 2000 soldiers were killed near Diyarbakir.³³⁵ By the end of August, the few labour conscripts that still remained alive in the province were serving in battalions near Siverek. Terrified for a similar fate, they inconspicuously dawdled over their work in order to postpone a potential massacre. When that fateful day arrived, a few conscripts resisted by killing a gendarme with a large stone, taking his rifle and shooting two others, including an officer. The desperate men were finally overpowered and massacred.³³⁶ The skirmish was reported to Istanbul, where Talât interpreted it as “Armenian men who killed and wounded some of their superiors and Muslims”. He then sent an order to all provinces to “deal accordingly with this issue”.³³⁷ After this event, the fate of the Christian labour battalions was sealed: they were finished off quickly. Even if the work was as yet unfinished, a wave of brutal although selective massacres swept through the provinces. Thousands of conscripts were dispatched mostly with knives and daggers, to save ammunition.³³⁸ Travelling between Urfa and Diyarbakir, a German officer saw an entire labour battalion, laying by the roadside with their throats slit.³³⁹ An unknown number of Armenians remained alive in the labour battalions, even after 1915.

The murderous violence against the Christian and especially Armenian population of the Ottoman Empire had long reached genocidal dimensions due to its organized, systematic, and categorical nature. While hundreds of thousands of human lives were being destroyed, little was known among the population, especially in the western provinces. Secrecy and censorship were two important regulations to be observed by the organizers of the genocide. Nobody was to open his or her mouth about the events, and any news of the massacres was to be suppressed. Talât ordered the Trabzon-based newspaper *Meşveret* closed down because it had published an apologetic explanation of the “temporary deportation” of the Armenians.³⁴⁰ The government

³³³ BOA, DH.ŞFR 53/131, Talât to Mamuret-ül Aziz, 27 May 1915.

³³⁴ Noel, *Diary of Major E. Noel* [n.282], p.11.

³³⁵ Qarabashi, *Dmo Zliho* [n.199], p.70.

³³⁶ Jacob Künzler, *Im Lande des Blutes und der Tränen: Erlebnisse in Mesopotamien während des Weltkrieges (1914-1918)* (Zürich: Chronos, 1999 [1921]), pp.47-48. Künzler was a Swiss missionary in Urfa during the war and heard about this massacre from a Syriac conscript, who had survived the killing.

³³⁷ BOA, DH.ŞFR 55-A/11, Talât to provinces, 1 September 1915.

³³⁸ Jacob Künzler, *Dreißig Jahre Dienst am Orient* (Basel: Birkhauser Verlag, 1933), p.54.

³³⁹ *Germany, Turkey and Armenia: A selection of documentary evidence relating to the Armenian atrocities from German and other sources* (London: Keliher, 1917), pp.80-85.

³⁴⁰ BOA, DH.ŞFR 54-A/181, Talât to the provinces of Erzurum, Adana, Bitlis, Urfa, Canik, and Maraş, 29 July 1915.

denied all national and international allegations and tried to counter these with propaganda.³⁴¹ For disinformation to be convincing the CUP deemed some sort of visual material necessary. Since Reşid had already displayed piles of guns he had found in Diyarbekir, this formula was reapplied:

[A]fter the gendarmes had killed a number of Armenian men, they put on them turbans and brought Kurdish women to weep and lament over them, saying that the Armenians had killed their men. They also brought a photographer to photograph the bodies and the weeping women, so that at a future time they might be able to convince Europe that it was the Armenians who had attacked the Kurds and killed them, that the Kurdish tribes had risen against them revenge, and that the Turkish Government had had no part in the matter.³⁴²

In Istanbul, few people had reliable information of the horrors at their disposal. When Hüseyin Cahit inquired at the prestigious *Cercle d'Orient* about the events, even the Armenian members of the foundation knew nothing about the massacres.³⁴³ Only at a short distance from the club, Talât was engaged on a daily basis in organizing the dispersion and isolation of the surviving Armenian intelligentsia.

The fate of two Armenian intellectuals indicates both Talât's and Reşid's direct involvement in their elimination: Vartkes Serengulian (1871-1915), deputy for Erzurum and Krikor Zohrab (1861-1915), author and deputy for Istanbul. On 12 May 1915 Vartkes dashed to Talât's house to protest against the mass arrests of the Armenian intelligentsia. Talât, his personal friend for more than a decade, calmly listened to Vartkes' fulmination, but flatly answered: "This is a question of the homeland, Vartkes. It does not allow appeals to personal relations and friendships".³⁴⁴ Vartkes and Zohrab were arrested in late May.³⁴⁵ Hüseyin Cahit recalled how he was visited early on a morning by Zohrab's wife, Clara Yazidjian. The nervous woman trembled and sobbed because of Zohrab's arrest, and asked Hüseyin Cahit to implore Talât to release her husband. Together they went to Talât's house and woke him up from his sleep. Mrs. Yazidjian begged Talât to exempt her husband from deportation but the stoic Interior Minister sat in his pijamas and listened to the woman's story quite indifferently. He then comforted her that Zohrab was being sent to Diyarbekir for a minor legal affair and that she had nothing to worry about. All pleas were in vain as both Zohrab and Vartkes were deported. When they reached Adana, Talât ordered local officials to contact them on 17 June.³⁴⁶ The duo was deported to Aleppo where they begged Cemal Paşa to intervene and save them from being court-martialled. However, Cemal Paşa's request was rebuffed by Talât, who insisted them to be sent to Diyarbekir. Finally,

³⁴¹ See for example a book published in 1916 by the Turkish Ministry for Foreign Affairs: *Die Ziele und Taten armenischer Revolutionäre: The Armenian aspirations and revolutionary movements: Aspirations et mouvements révolutionnaires arméniens: Ermeni Âml ve Harekât-ı İhtilâliyesi, Tesâvir ve Vesâik* (Istanbul: Matbaa-ı Amire, 1332). For the denialist campaign the CUP initiated in 1915, see: Hilmar Kaiser, "Dall'impero alla repubblica: la continuità del negazionismo turco," in: Marcello Flores (ed.), *Storia, Verità, Giustizia: I crimini del XX secolo* (Milano: Bruno Mondadori, 2001), pp.89-113.

³⁴² Al-Ghusayn, *Martyred Armenia* [n.233], p.42.

³⁴³ Yalçın, *Siyasal Anılar* [n.39], p.234.

³⁴⁴ Hüseyin Cahit Yalçın, *Tanıdıklarım* (Istanbul: Yapı Kredi, 2002), pp.49-50.

³⁴⁵ Beylerian, *Les grandes puissances* [n.275], p.40.

³⁴⁶ BOA, DH.ŞFR 54/48, Talât to Reşid, 17 June 1915.

between Urfa and Diyarbekir the two were murdered by Çerkez Ahmed, on orders of Reşid. Çerkez Ahmed later confessed that he personally shot Vartkes dead with a single bullet to his head and shattered Zohrab's head with a rock.³⁴⁷ The government spread the story that Zohrab had died of a heart-attack. The German journalist Von Tyszkä refuted this, claiming that at least Vartkes was “jedenfalls kerngesund” but nevertheless had not arrived in Diyarbekir either.³⁴⁸

Together with these assassinations, witnesses to the explicit killing had to be silenced in order for state secrecy to be tight. The CUP had lost control over some of its Special Organization operatives, who did not fully perform the program as they wished. These loose cannons would for example brag about their genocidal accomplishments, or abuse their license to kill by shooting people for fun. They had become out of favor.³⁴⁹ When the CUP felt it did not require their services any longer, local officials disposed of them by summarily executing them, mostly in the autumn of 1915. For example, Talât requested the aforementioned Çerkez Ahmed to be sent to Istanbul as he and his gang would affect security conditions in Urfa.³⁵⁰ When this did not happen, Talât issued a decree that his “elimination is required” (*iğalesi vacip*). Ahmed was deported to Damascus and hung by Cemal Paşa.³⁵¹ Yakup Cemil, one of the CUP's most important gangsters, had acquired so much power in the war that he figured he could get away with practically everything. He went too far when he openly threatened Enver Paşa, whereupon Enver had him arrested and executed in front of a firing squad.³⁵² The Reman brothers Ömer and Mustafa were killed in September 1915 by Reşid's assistant Çerkez Şakir, who ordered his Circassian militia to murder the tribesmen with daggers. A peasant who happened to walk by coincidentally saw the violent settlement and was killed as well, in order to silence potential witnesses.³⁵³ Militia member Zaza Alo was first deployed on the Syrian front but deported to Çankırı, where he was later killed in a skirmish with gendarmes.³⁵⁴ At the same time, Major Rüşdü of the Diyarbekir militia was accused of corruption, embezzlement, and personal enrichment – which was still forbidden, at least officially. He escaped elimination and prosecution owing to protection offered by his superior Reşid and continued his work in the province.³⁵⁵

A final problem that was as yet unsolved was the question of the property taken from or left behind by the victims. In the official decree for deportation (30 May 1915) a clear stipulation for confiscation was included with regard to the property. The Armenians were to bring along anything they wished, and as for the immovables, the specification contained clear instructions on how to handle the goods: “the type and value and amount of the real estate are to be

³⁴⁷ Refik, *İki Komite, İki Kıtıl* [n.187], pp.175-76.

³⁴⁸ PAAA, R14088, Von Tyszkä to Zimmermann, 1 October 1915, enclosure no.1.

³⁴⁹ One of the most infamous killers was Çerkez Ahmed, who vaunted himself as follows: “I served this country. Go and look, I turned the areas around Van into Kaaba soil. You won't find a single Armenian there today. While I'm serving this country, bastards like Talât are drinking ice-cold beer in Istanbul, and place me under arrest, no, this is damaging my honour!” Refik, *İki Komite, İki Kıtıl* [n.187], p.175.

³⁵⁰ BOA, DH.ŞFR 55/132, Talât to Reşid, 21 August 1915.

³⁵¹ Refik, *İki Komite, İki Kıtıl* [n.187], pp.176-77.

³⁵² Mustafa R. Esatlı, *İttihat ve Terakki tarihinde esrar perdesi ve Yakup Cemil niçin öldürüldü?* (İstanbul: Hürriyet, 1975).

³⁵³ *Épisodes des massacres* [n.272], p.30.

³⁵⁴ BOA, DH.EUM.AYŞ 24/2, 11 October 1919.

determined [...] and its liquidation through auctions and its equivalent rendered to the owners”.³⁵⁶ However, these were rhetorical pretexts as the unilateral expropriation of the Ottoman Armenian community occurred simultaneous to or shortly after their murder. Everything that they owned was automatically confiscated by the government, which issued a decree for the establishment of ‘Commissions for Abandoned Properties’ (*Emvâl-ı Metrûke Komisyonu*) in all provincial capitals. These committees were charged with the allocation and liquidation of all Armenian property seized by the authorities, and drew up detailed inventories of sequestered property.³⁵⁷ As a rule, mobile goods were looted by officials who had organized the killing of its owners, whereas the confiscated real estate was transferred to the state, which needed the farms, factories, and shops for Muslim settlers (see chapter 3). Some immobles were allocated to the army.³⁵⁸ As for Armenian money, hard cash was looted by whoever killed its owner, and bank assets fell into the hands of the CUP. The revenue of the genocide was considerable: in 1916 the Ottoman Ministry of Economy moved 5 million Turkish gold pounds, representing about 30,000 kilograms in gold, to the Reichsbank in Berlin.³⁵⁹ This was highly unusual for an agricultural empire on the losing hand in a world war, facing rampant scarcity.

On 1 July, the CUP ordered the establishment of a Commission for Diyarbekir, appointing Nâzım Bey and Reşad Bey as its directors.³⁶⁰ An additional order indicated that the local population was in no way to meddle in the property affairs.³⁶¹ The local commission, headed by Reşid, coordinated the organized larceny from beginning to end. All of the militia leaders were involved in the scheme. While the banker Tirpandjian was tortured in prison, Veli Necdet occupied his house and remained there throughout the war.³⁶² Police chief Memduh Bey reportedly gained 50,000 Turkish pounds in the persecutions.³⁶³ İbrahim Bedreddin, who became district governor of Mardin, sent emissaries to retrieve valuable documents taken by Kurdish chieftains. Since the illiterate tribesmen had no means to redeem bank notes such as insurances, checks, and other valuables, these were to be delivered to the authorities.³⁶⁴ Churches and houses of rich Christians were converted to military hospitals, ammunition depots, state orphanages, or

³⁵⁵ BOA, DH.ŞFR 57/5, Talât to Karesi province, 14 October 1915.

³⁵⁶ BOA, MV 198/163, 30 May 1915.

³⁵⁷ Gilbert Gidel, *Confiscation de biens des réfugiés arméniens par le gouvernement turc* (Paris: Massis, 1929). The government in Istanbul requested detailed knowledge of Armenian-owned ploughland. For example, on 5 July the İAMM asks literally: “What kind of instruments and machines are needed to harvest the crops on the farmland abandoned by the Armenians?” BOA, DH.ŞFR 54/301, İAMM to the provinces of Sivas, Diyarbekir, and Mamuret-ul Aziz.

³⁵⁸ BOA, DH.ŞFR 54-A/390 & 390-1, Talât to provinces, 13 August 1915.

³⁵⁹ André Mandelstam, *La Société des Nations et les Puissances devant le problème arménien* (Beirut: Hamaskaine, 1970 [1926]), pp.489-93.

³⁶⁰ BOA, DH.ŞFR 54/273, İAMM to Diyarbekir, 1 July 1915. Four days later, the Commission was established. BOA, DH.ŞFR 54/307, 5 July 1915.

³⁶¹ BOA, DH.ŞFR 54/106, İAMM to the Presidency of the Commissions for Abandoned Property of Erzurum, Diyarbekir, Zor, Aleppo, İzmit, Kayseri, and Maraş, 22 June 1915.

³⁶² Yeghiayan, *British Foreign Office Dossiers* [n.152], p.42.

³⁶³ Edward Noel, *Diary of Major E. Noel* [n.282], p.11.

³⁶⁴ Arthur Beylerian (ed.), Marie-Dominique Berré, “Massacres de Mardin,” in: *Haigazian Armenological Review*, vol.17 (1997), p.98. For similar methods applied in the Malatya region see: Hilmar Kaiser, “‘A Scene from the Inferno’: The Armenians of Erzerum and the Genocide, 1915-1916,” in: Kieser, *Der Völkermord an den Armeniern und die Shoah* [n.208], p.164.

mosques. Inventories such as carpets, curtains, silverware, clerical clothing, closets, and even sacraments were sold or carried off by policemen and gendarmes.³⁶⁵

Although he denied everything in his memoirs, blaming irregularities on his ignorance of provincial conditions, and challenging his denouncers to prove their claims, the evidence of Dr. Mehmed Reşid's personal enrichment in the expropriation campaign is overwhelming.³⁶⁶ Even though he was ordered by Talât to "return the cash, jewellery, and other property to the Armenians who have been attacked during their deportation",³⁶⁷ Reşid went as far to even confiscate the property of the American missionaries.³⁶⁸ As Fa'iz Al-Ghusayn witnessed during his brief arrest in the Diyarbekir prison:

You might see a carpet, worth thirty pounds, sold for five, a man's costume, worth four pounds, sold for two medjidies, and so on with the rest of the articles, this being especially the case with musical instruments, such as pianos, etc., which had no value at all. All money and valuables were collected by the Commandant of Gendarmerie and the Vali, Reshid Bey, the latter taking them with him when he went to Constantinople.³⁶⁹

Reşid later objected to these claims and asked the rhetorical question: "Have those who utter this heinous slander ever thought of how it would have been possible to carry and hide 200,000 pounds and so many valuables?"³⁷⁰ This was possible. According to a Dr. Hyacinth Fardjalian, Dr. Reşid had looted jewellery, precious stones, a pile of carpets, and an assortment of antiquities. Dr. Fardjalian related: "I myself saw Rechid Bey arrive at Aleppo by a train bound for Constantinople with 43 boxes of jewellery and 2 cases full of precious stones".³⁷¹ When Reşid was assigned to the governorship of Ankara in March 1916, he had amassed a fortune from the expropriations. Convinced that he could get away with the embezzlement, he responded to an advertisement in the newspaper *İkdam* for a house worth 9,000 pounds. According to Minister of Education Ahmed Şükrü Bey, "it was suspicious that Reşid had arrived in Diyarbekir with financial straits but managed to buy that house only two years later".³⁷²

The practice of confiscation was in fact a concrete result of the indistinct notion of the aspired 'national economy'. On 6 January 1916 Talât ordered an empire-wide decree about the factories confiscated in the genocide. The order read:

The movable property left by the Armenians should be conserved for long-term preservation, and for the sake of an increase of Muslim businesses in our country, companies need to be established strictly made up of Muslims. Movable property should be given to them under suitable conditions that will guarantee the business' steady consolidation. The founder, the management, and the representatives should be chosen from honourable

³⁶⁵ Qarabashi, *Dmo Zliho* [n.199], pp.130-31.

³⁶⁶ Reşid, *Mülâhazât* [n.209], pp.109-11.

³⁶⁷ *BOA*, DH.ŞFR 56/315, Talât to Reşid, 6 October 1915.

³⁶⁸ Kieser, "Dr. Mehmed Reshid" [n.208], p.265.

³⁶⁹ Al-Ghusayn, *Martyred Armenia* [n.233], p.30.

³⁷⁰ Reşid, *Mülâhazât* [n.209], p.109.

³⁷¹ *Foreign Office* 371/4172/24597, folio 304.

³⁷² For Ahmed Şükrü's deposition on 12 November 1918 see: Osman S. Kocahanoğlu (ed.), *İttihat ve Terakki'nin Sorgulanması ve Yargılanması* (İstanbul: Temel, 1998), p.195.

leaders and the elite, and to allow tradesmen and agriculturists to participate in its dividends the vouchers need to be half a lira or one lira and registered to their names to preclude that the capital falls in foreign hands. The growth of entrepreneurship in the minds of Muslim people needs to be monitored, and this endeavour and the results of its implementation needs to be reported to the Ministry step by step.³⁷³

In Diyarbekir, one of the most telling examples of this policy was the fate of the silk factory in Diyarbekir. The factory was owned by Tirpandjian and used to provide work for dozens of employees, mostly Christians. Silk was woven, dyed in various colors, and processed into regional clothing, characteristic for Diyarbekir. Lütfü Dokucu was the grandson of one of the employees. His grandfather was killed in the genocide when the militia rounded up the employees and executed them. Müftüzâde Hüseyin, brother of Müftüzâde Şeref, laid his hands on the factory and exploited it in the decades after the war.³⁷⁴

By autumn 1915, the Christian population of Diyarbekir province was thoroughly dispossessed, deported, and critically reduced in numbers. On 18 September Reşid wired a telegram to Talât, reporting that “the number deported from the province amounts to approximately one hundred twenty thousand”.³⁷⁵ According to Jacques Rhétoré, during the persecutions of 1915-1916 a total of 144,185 Christians disappeared, of which 58,000 Gregorian Armenians, 11,500 Catholic Armenians, 10,010 Chaldeans, 3450 Catholic Syriacs, 60,725 Jacobite Syriacs, and 500 Protestants.³⁷⁶ A higher estimate was calculated by Major Noel, who wrote that the total number of victims was made up of 45,000 Gregorian Armenians, 6000 Catholic Armenians, 7000 Chaldeans, 2000 Catholic Syriacs, 96,000 Jacobite Syriacs, and 1200 Protestants, all in all summing up to 157,000 people victimized.³⁷⁷ Whatever their precise numbers, the Christian population of Diyarbekir province was all but eradicated. Entire villages, neighbourhoods, parishes, and extended families were destroyed or reduced to destitution in the genocidal persecution of 1915.

2.4 Center and periphery

The identities of the organizers and perpetrators of the genocidal persecution in Diyarbekir province have been explored relatively well. There was little doubt that the local CUP elite collaborated with certain Kurdish tribesmen to achieve their aim of destroying the Armenian community of the province. On the other hand, little is known regarding the scope of victims targeted. The notion that official CUP policy targeted only the Armenians contradicts clearly with

³⁷³ BOA, DH.ŞFR 59/239, İAMM to provinces, 6 January 1916.

³⁷⁴ Interview with Lütfü Dokucu (aged 81) from Diyarbekir, conducted in Turkish by Şeyhmus Diken in Diyarbekir (2003), published as: “Lütfü Dokucu,” in: Şeyhmus Diken, *Diyarbekir diyarım, yitirmişem yanarım* (İstanbul: İletişim, 2003), p.49.

³⁷⁵ BOA, DH.EUM, 2.Şb. 68/71, Reşid to Talât, 18 September 1915.

³⁷⁶ Rhétoré, *Les chrétiens aux bêtes!* [n.164], p.241. For specific numbers for Mardin district see: *Ibid.*, p.243.

³⁷⁷ Noel, *Diary of Major E. Noel* [n.282], p.11.

the broad diversity of non-Armenian victims, especially in the Mardin district.³⁷⁸ In other words, how Armenian was the genocide supposed to be? The Mardin district can serve as a fitting backdrop for an exploration of this discrepancy because of the district's religious diversity. The evidence, admittedly patchy, supports the argument that Dr. Reşid amplified the anti-Armenian persecution into an anti-Christian persecution, and by the time he was reproached for this policy, it was too late.

Most Christian notables of Diyarbekir were incarcerated in May. By this time, there hadn't been much persecution in Mardin, the citadel city south of Diyarbekir. As in other provincial towns Reşid had ordered the mayor, Hilmi Bey, to arrest the Christian notables of the city. Hilmi reportedly answered that the Armenians of Mardin were Arabic-speaking Catholics, and had little in common with the Gregorian Armenians. The mayor also added that they were unarmed and honorable citizens, and that there was no reason at all to arrest any other Christians either.³⁷⁹ Reşid was not interested in this reply and sent Aziz Feyzi in May to incite Muslim notables to destroy the Mardin Christians. Feyzi toured the region and bribed and persuaded the chieftains of the Deşi, Mıskiye, Kiki, and Helecan tribes. From 15 May on, the scenario of Diyarbekir was repeated in Mardin. Memduh moved into the house of the notable Syriac family Yonan and began organizing the process of persecution. First he arrested dozens of Armenian and Syriac men and tortured them to extract confessions of disloyalty and high treason. In the meantime he extorted large sums of money from the families of the arrested men who offered Memduh financial compensation in exchange for the release of their children.³⁸⁰

Reşid sent İbrahim Bedreddin and militiamen Çerkez Şakir and Çerkez Harun to Mardin to organize the physical destruction of the Christian population of Mardin. Together they organized a militia of 500 men and placed them under command of the brothers Nuri and Tahir El Ensari, both of them Sheikhs of the Ensari family.³⁸¹ While Hilmi was still in office, the group bypassed standard bureaucratic procedures and began arresting Christian notables, such as Anton Gasparian.³⁸² However, Reşid and his men probably considered the presence of an uncooperative mayor an intransigent obstacle for the organization of a massacre, a complex undertaking all the same. Therefore, Reşid attempted to apply his tested method of having the mayor removed, but his appeal only got the equally unwilling official Mehmed Şefik Bey reinstalled to his old district Mardin. Moreover, Talât suggested İbrahim Bedri to be "assigned to a vacant office of district

³⁷⁸ For a detailed study of the genocide in Mardin see: Yves Ternon, *Mardin 1915: Anatomie pathologique d'une destruction* (special issue of the *Revue d'Histoire Arménienne Contemporaine*, vol.4, 2002). One of the most interesting but understudied regions still awaiting in-depth research is the Tur Abdin district around Midyat. To do justice to the complexity and multi-faceted nature of the wartime events in that region, involving interethnic loyalties, Kurdish tribal machinations, and armed Syriac resistance, one would have to conduct a separate, multi-dimensional study. The *Seyfo Center*, based in the Netherlands, is currently collecting Syriac Oral Histories that have been kept in private hands until now and may prove very useful in an account of the persecutions in Tur Abdin. See: <<http://www.seyfo.com>>.

³⁷⁹ Sarafian, "The Disasters" [n.242].

³⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p.263.

³⁸¹ Rhétoré, *Les chrétiens aux bêtes!* [n.164], p.65.

³⁸² Armalto, *Al-Qousara* [n.181], p.40.

governor”.³⁸³ Having replaced Hilmi by Mehmed Şefik, Reşid did not observe this new political constellation with district governor Şefik either. He ignored Şefik and treated his emissary Bedri as a shadow-official with the authority of a district governor. In Mardin, Bedri was assisted by Halil Edib, who became criminal judge on 17 June 1915. Bedri himself officially became district governor only on 12 September.³⁸⁴ The *Gleichschaltung*³⁸⁵ by the CUP had not been implemented perfectly, but it was sufficient for the genocidal designs to be carried out in Mardin.

On 3 June 1915, at eight o'clock in the evening, Mardin was surrounded by Reşid's militiamen, headed by Çerkez Harun. Memduh Bey arrested the Bishop Ignatius Maloyan and his entire Armenian Catholic clergy and locked them up in the Mardin castle, a fortress on top of the city. The next days he arrested hundreds of Christian notables, according to a French eye-witness, “tous pris dans les divers rangs de la société, sans différences d'âge, ni de rite, ni de condition”.³⁸⁶ The men were all taken to prison and severely tortured for a week by criminal judge Halil Edib. On 9 June a group of militiamen arrived from Diyarbakir with dozens of sets of chains and galloped off to the fort. The prisoners were explained that they were summoned by governor Reşid and would be taken to Diyarbakir the next morning. The notables realized at this point they were going to be killed.³⁸⁷

The treatment of the Mardin notables was a copy of that of the Diyarbakir notables, who had already been massacred in the Reman gorge by that time. The first convoy, just over 400 Christians of all denominations, left Mardin on 10 June and was marched off to Diyarbakir by Memduh on horseback. After having walked two hours in the burning heat, Memduh took away four notables (Iskender Adem, his son August, Naum Cinanci, and Iskender Hammal) and killed them.³⁸⁸ Three hours later, the convoy was halted at the Kurdish village Adirshek, near the Sheikhan caves. Memduh Bey gathered the convoy and read their death sentence out loud. He added that conversion to Islam would avert death and gave those who refused conversion one hour to prepare for their deaths. Memduh had barely finished his words when Bishop Maloyan responded he would never convert and preferred to die as a Christian rather than to live as a Muslim. The great majority of the convoy agreed, whereupon Memduh took 100 men, lead them away to the Şeyhan caves and had them all murdered and burnt. After this first massacre he

³⁸³ BOA, DH.ŞFR 53/291, Talât to Reşid, 8 June 1915. Hilmi was demoted and assigned to a minor office in the Mosul province. Just as he left for Mosul, Reşid sent out orders for him to be murdered. Hilmi escaped assassination because the mayor that was assigned with this task was a personal friend who procrastinated in carrying out the order. In the meantime Hilmi crossed into Mosul province, out of the jurisdiction of the Diyarbakir provincial authorities, and thereby out of Reşid's deadly reach. Sarafian, “The Disasters” [n.242].

³⁸⁴ Suavi Aydın *et al.* (eds.), *Mardin: Aşiret-Cemaat-Devlet* (İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı, 2000), p.242. Armalto, *Al-Qousara* [n.181], p.33.

³⁸⁵ The German word *Gleichschaltung* (literally: “synchronization”) is a typical Nazi euphemism and describes the process by which the Nazi regime successively established a system of authoritarian control and tight coordination over all aspects of society between 1933 and 1939. This included the purification of the state bureaucracy and amounted to removal of officials without National-Socialist sympathies. Karl D. Bracher, “Stufe totalitärer Gleichschaltung: Die Befestigung der nationalsozialistischen Herrschaft,” in: *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte*, vol.4 (1956), pp.30-42; Volker Dahm, “Nationale Einheit und partikulare Vielfalt: Zur Frage der kulturpolitischen Gleichschaltung im Dritten Reich,” in: *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte*, vol.43, no.2 (1995), pp.221-66. Contrary to the NSDAP, the CUP did not have enough time and power to prepare, implement, and consolidate this operation before the war, therefore the *Gleichschaltung* of provincial bureaucracies was often fulfilled impromptu during the war.

³⁸⁶ Hyacinthe Simon, *Mardine: la ville héroïque: Autel et tombeau de l'Arménie (Asie Mineure) durant les massacres de 1915* (Jounieh: Maison Naaman pour la culture, 1991), Naji Naaman (ed.), chapter 3, pp.17-18.

³⁸⁷ Rhétoré, *Les chrétiens aux bêtes!* [n.164], p.70.

returned and took an other 100 men off to the Roman castle Zirzawan, where he slaughtered them and threw them in large wells.³⁸⁹ Those who agreed on conversion were taken away by the Kurdish villagers to their shaikh and became Muslims. Only the next day, the rest of the convoy was marched off further and halted four hours from Diyarbekir. For the last time, Memduh turned to Maloyan and urged him to convert. When he refused, Memduh pulled out his handgun and shot the Bishop in his head.³⁹⁰ He then ordered the firing squad to massacre the rest of the convoy.³⁹¹ The work was finished and the perpetrators rode to Diyarbekir and reported their accomplishment to governor Reşid.³⁹² Two weeks later Talât asked Reşid about the whereabouts of Maloyan.³⁹³

The killings in Diyarbekir province had become so explicit that national and international political actors freely began speaking about them. The genocide had definitively broken through the circle of CUP secrecy. Apart from the Catholic clergymen in Mardin, an other Western observer to the massacres in Diyarbekir province was the German vice consul of Mosul, Walter Holstein. On 10 June he wired the German embassy, expressing his abhorrence of the crimes. When Holstein spoke to the governor of Mosul about the killings, the latter responded “daß allein der Vali von Diarbekir Verantwortung trage”.³⁹⁴ However, Holstein was not content with this evasive reply and dispatched a second, more indignant telegram to the embassy two days later:

Die Niedermetzlung der Armenier im Vilajet Diarbekir wird hier alltäglich bekannter und erzeugt eine wachsende Unruhe unter der hiesigen Bevölkerung die bei der unverständigen Gewissenlosigkeit und der Schwäche der hiesigen Regierung leicht unabsehbare Folgen herbeiführen kann. In den Bezirken Mardin [...] haben sich Zustände zu einer wahren Christenverfolgung ausgewachsen. Daran trägt zweifellos die Regierung die Schuld.³⁹⁵

The well intentioned message made its way through the German bureaucracy to Talât and most probably to Reşid too.³⁹⁶ What Holstein did not know was the preparation for a second convoy of Christian notables in Mardin, the day after his cable.

³⁸⁸ Simon, *Mardine: la ville héroïque* [n.386], p.64.

³⁸⁹ Rhétoré, *Les chrétiens aux bêtes!* [n.164], p.78.

³⁹⁰ Bishop Maloyan was later beatified by the Vatican: *Ciliciae Armenorum seu Mardinensium: Beatificationis seu Canonizationis servi Dei Ignatii Choukrallah Maloyan, archiepiscopi mardinensis in opium fidei, uti fertur, interfecti (1915): Positio super vita, martyrio et fama martyrii* (Rome: Tipografia Guerra, 2000).

³⁹¹ Armalto, *Al-Qousara* [n.181], p.47.

³⁹² PAAA, R14087, director of the Deutscher Hilfsbund für christliches Liebeswerk im Orient (Frankfurt am Main) Friedrich Schuchardt to the Auswärtiges Amt, 21 August 1915, enclosure no.6: “In Mardin wurde der Mutessarif auch abgesetzt, da er nicht nach dem Willen des Walis. Von hier hat man einmal 500 und dann wieder 300 der Notabeln aller Konfessionen nach D. bringen lassen. Die ersten 600 sind nie angekommen, von den anderen hat man nichts mehr gehört.”

³⁹³ BOA, DH.ŞFR 54-A/178, Talât to Reşid, 29 July 1915.

³⁹⁴ PAAA, Botschaft Konstantinopel 169, Holstein to embassy, 10 June 1915. This telegram contains a footnote which reads: “Herrn Kap Humann für Enver”. The note refers to Lieutenant Commander and Marine Attaché Hans Humann, a personal friend of Enver Paşa’s and a staunch advocate of Ottoman expansion into the Caucasus. According to an intimate observer, Humann had unfettered access to the CUP elite and held “an outstanding position of extraordinary influence.” Ernst Jäckh, *The Rising Crescent: Turkey yesterday, today, and to-morrow* (New York: Farrar & Rinehart, 1944), p.119.

³⁹⁵ PAAA, Botschaft Konstantinopel 169, Holstein to embassy, 13 June 1915.

³⁹⁶ Talât seemingly was not moved much by these protests. He listened to the stories about the massacres and replied to an employee at the German Embassy named Dr. Mordtmann, “daß die Pforte den Weltkrieg dazu benutzen wollte, um mit ihren inneren Feinden - den einheimischen Christen - gründlich aufzuräumen, ohne dabei durch die diplomatische Intervention des Auslandes gestört zu werden.” PAAA, R14086, Wangenheim to Bethmann-Hollweg, 17 June 1915. When Kâmil Bey, a member of parliament for Diyarbekir who opposed the

In the meantime, the second convoy of Mardin Christians, 266 people of all denominations, was sent off on 14 June. This convoy was lead by militia commander Abdul Kadir (a subordinate of Çerkez Şakir) and Tevfik Bey, who had eliminated the Armenians of Derik.³⁹⁷ As had been done to the first convoy, the group was halted at the Sheikhan caves where they were forced to pay tribute to the Sultan Şeyhmus cult. The men noticed that Kurdish tribesmen, armed with rifles, axes and spades, had surrounded them. The militiamen invited the Christians to descend to the cave to drink from the cold spring water, but those who went for a sip never returned. The killings went on during the night and on the next day. More than 100 men were killed at the Şeyhan caves, whereafter the convoy was marched off to Diyarbekir. All of a sudden, the convoy came across three mounted gendarmes approaching the convoy at high speed. The gendarmes reached the convoy and proclaimed that the Sultan had pardoned the non-Armenian Christians from persecution. Their hands were untied and they were allowed to drink water and eat bread. The Armenians were not fed and continued the deportation with their hands tied. The convoy was marched off again and reached Diyarbekir on 16 June, where they were sent to the caravanserai-prison.³⁹⁸

As in Diyarbekir, after the elimination of the notables, the remaining Christians were sent off to their deaths. These were mainly women, children, and the elderly, although many men were still alive as well. On 2 July, a convoy of 600 men was taken away and slaughtered just outside the city walls. Before sending the victims down the Mardin road to the valley, İbrahim Bedri and Memduh resorted to large-scale extortion. On 13 July, Memduh negotiated with the families of the Christian men still in custody about considerable ransom, which amounted to several hundreds of pounds per family. Having extorted the families, the men were sent off and killed on the Diyarbekir road.³⁹⁹ After the men, their families were targeted. From late June to late October several convoys comprising hundreds of women and children were lead away and destroyed. For example, on 10 August, a convoy of 600 women and children were taken through the Mardin plain further south. Some had already died of exhaustion and sunstrokes when the convoy was halted in the district of the Kiki tribe. After Kurdish tribesmen had finished selecting women and children they fancied, the 300 remaining victims were massacred with axes and swords. A small batch of survivors was able to flee and hide in the desert caves.⁴⁰⁰ Within a month or two, the Christian population of Mardin city had drastically been reduced.

The district of Mardin counted several large villages with large numbers of Christian inhabitants. The largest among these were Q'sor (Gulliye) and Tell Ermen, each harbouring

massacres, traveled to Istanbul to complain to Talât about Reşid and Feyzi's genocidal campaign in Diyarbekir, Talât threatened to have him assassinated if he didn't quiet down. Yeghiayan, *British Foreign Office Dossiers* [n.152], p.482.

³⁹⁷ Rhétoré, *Les chrétiens aux bêtes!* [n.164], p.83; Simon, *Mardine: la ville héroïque* [n.386], pp.69-70.

³⁹⁸ Ishak Armalto was one of the survivors of this second convoy. Upon arrival at the caravanserai in Diyarbekir, Armalto and a Joseph Paul Keyip saw three woven baskets (*zembils*) filled with chopped-off ears, noses, fingers, penises and gorged-out eyes. Armalto, *Al-Qousara* [n.181], pp.52-53, 103.

³⁹⁹ Sarafian, "The Disasters" [n.242].

⁴⁰⁰ Rhétoré, *Les chrétiens aux bêtes!* [n.164], pp.164-66.

several thousand souls. Tell Ermen had already experienced some persecution and arrests by Memduh's militia, but massive violence was not applied until 1 July. On this day the militia and a large number of Kurdish tribesmen invaded the village, where the terrified villagers had nestled in the church. On orders of the militia commander and with assistance from the village headman Derwiş Bey, the church was attacked and a massacre ensued. The killers used bland instruments and did not distinguish between men and women, decapitating many of the victims. Some were drawn and quartered, or hacked to pieces with axes. A little girl who crawled out from under the corpses was battered to death when she refused to convert to Islam. Approximately 70 women were raped in the church before being put to the sword. After the massacre Kurdish women entered the church and used daggers to stab to death any survivors.⁴⁰¹ The bodies were disposed of by being thrown into wells or burnt to ashes.⁴⁰² When Rafael de Nogales visited the village a few weeks later, he met a few severely traumatized survivors, and was shocked by "corpses barely covered with heaps of stone from which emerged here and there a bloody tress or an arm or leg gnawed on by hyenas".⁴⁰³ A German navy officer visited Tell Ermen too and saw chopped-off children's hands and women's hair.⁴⁰⁴ A week after the massacre, a Major Von Mikusch reported to Consul Holstein he had met the militia, who had "related about the massacre, beaming with joy" (*freudestrahlend von Massacres erzählt*).⁴⁰⁵

The next day, on 2 July at 8 o'clock in the evening, Memduh Bey ordered the attack on the village of Q'sor (Gulliye), a predominantly Jacobite Syriac agricultural center on the Mardin plain. The militia was headed by Sergeant Yusuf, son of Nuri Ensari, and aided by chieftain Mohammed Ağa of the Milli tribe. Kurdish tribesmen of the Deşi, Mişkiye, and Helecan tribes, as well as some Arabs, had come over to Q'sor to participate. The village was invaded and the population was massacred. Children were thrown from roofs and mutilated with axes. Many villagers were crammed together in the house of the village headman Elias Cabbar Hinno, and burnt alive.⁴⁰⁶ After the massacre, the village was burnt down, a spectacle visible from Mardin, where the inhabitants looked down in awe. According to Hyacinthe Simon, İbrahim Bedreddin watched the bloodbath too, cheering and applauding.⁴⁰⁷

Durant ce drame sanglant un homme était assis au balcone de sa terrasse, humant l'air frais du matin et contemplant une rosace de feu piquée sur la plaine: c'était le gouverneur de Mardine, c'était Bedreddin Bey. Les barbares égorgeaient et brûlaient ses subordonnées, lui fumait sa cigarette.⁴⁰⁸

⁴⁰¹ Armalto, *Al-Qousara* [n.181], pp.102-3.

⁴⁰² PAAA, R14087, director of the Deutscher Hilfsbund für christliches Liebeswerk im Orient (Frankfurt am Main) Friedrich Schuchardt to the Auswärtiges Amt, 21 August 1915, enclosure no.5.

⁴⁰³ Nogales, *Four years* [n.266], pp.171-72.

⁴⁰⁴ Bundesarchiv (Freiburg), Reichsmarine 40/434, G.B. N. 8289, Engelking to Fleet Command, 11 November 1915, quoted in: Hilmar Kaiser, *At the Crossroads of Der Zor: Death, Survival, and Humanitarian Resistance in Aleppo, 1915-1917* (London: Gomidas, 2002), p.84.

⁴⁰⁵ PAAA, R14086, Wangenheim to Bethmann Hollweg, 9 July 1915.

⁴⁰⁶ Armalto, *Al-Qousara* [n.181], p.102.

⁴⁰⁷ Noel, *Diary of Major E. Noel* [n.282], part 1, p.11.

⁴⁰⁸ Simon, *Mardine: la ville héroïque* [n.386], p.53.

Dozens of pretty women were raped and dozens more were carried off. According to survivor Abdulaziz Jacob, Yusuf Ensari had kept at least 50 women in his home in Mardin for serial rape.⁴⁰⁹ The massive looting went on for two more days and by the third day the once prosperous village Q'sor had been reduced to a state of complete devastation.⁴¹⁰

The massacres in Mardin were a major component of the 'reign of terror' that Dr. Reşid had pursued all over Diyarbekir province. It is very probable that due to Reşid's fanaticism, the CUP genocide in Diyarbekir exceeded in efficiency, scope, speed, and cruelty any other province of the Ottoman Empire. Reşid's militia murdered without mercy, without distinction, and without consequences. His bloody rule obviously did not go unnoticed, since vice consul Holstein had already denounced the governor's policy. Other international observers were disturbed of his campaign as well. A French report noted about Reşid's treatment of the Christians he imprisoned: "Il est difficile de décrire ici en détail les souffrances et les tortures que ces malheureux ont subies en prison pendant tout ce temps".⁴¹¹ Likewise, Aleppo Consul Jesse Jackson wrote on 28 June that the persecution of the Armenians in his city intensified. Jackson informed Ambassador Morgenthau specifically about "the horrible things taking place in Diarbekir. Just such a reign of terror has begun in this city also".⁴¹²

Most protests emanated from German officials, stationed in the eastern provinces. Aleppo Consul Walter Rößler wrote about Diyarbekir province that they received "die schauerlichsten Gerüchte, welche uns ganz an spanische Inquisition erinnern".⁴¹³ Ambassador Wangenheim forwarded to Berlin the news about "das Vilajet Diarbekir, in dem die Armenier besonders grausam verfolgt werden sollen".⁴¹⁴ When Holstein received the news about the Q'sor and Tell Ermen massacres, he wrote an even more indignant telegram to Wangenheim:

Der frühere Mutessariff von Mardin, zur Zeit hier, mitteilt mir folgendes: Der Vali von Diarbekir, Reschid Bey, wüte unter der Christenheit seines Vilajets wie ein toller Bluthund; er hat vor kurzem auch in Mardin siebenhundert Christen (meistens Armenier) darunter armenischen Bischof in einer Nacht durch aus Diarbekir speziell entsandte Gendarmerie sammeln und in der Nähe der Stadt wie Hammel abschlachten lassen. Reschid Bey fährt fort in seiner Blutarbeit unter Unschuldigen deren Zahl wie der Mutessariff mich versicherte, heute zweitausend übersteigt. Falls d. Regierung nicht sofort ganz energische Maßnahmen gegen Reschid Bey ergreift, wird muselmanische niedere Bevölkerung d. hiesigen Vilajets gleichfalls Christenmetzeleien beginnen. Die Lage hier in dieser Hinsicht wird täglich drohender. Reschid Bey sollte sofort abberufen werden womit dokumentiert würde dass die Regierung seine Schandtaten nicht billigt und wodurch allgemeine Erregung hier beschwichtigt werden könnte⁴¹⁵

⁴⁰⁹ Yeghiayan, *British Foreign Office Dossiers* [n.152], p.229.

⁴¹⁰ Rhétoré, *Les chrétiens aux bêtes!* [n.164], pp.195-96.

⁴¹¹ Beylerian, *Les grandes puissances* [n.275], p.49, document no.156: "Note du Département sur les massacres arméniens".

⁴¹² *National Archives RG 59*, 867.4016/92, Jackson to Morgenthau, 28 June 1915, in: Ara Sarafian (ed.), *United States Official Records on the Armenian Genocide 1915-1917* (London: Gomidas Institute, 2004), p.84.

⁴¹³ PAAA, R14086, Rößler to Bethmann Hollweg, 29 June 1915.

⁴¹⁴ PAAA, R14086, Wangenheim to Bethmann Hollweg, 9 July 1915.

⁴¹⁵ PAAA, Botschaft Konstantinopel 169, Holstein to Embassy, 10 July 1915.

The insistence pertaining to this message impelled Wangenheim to take a stand about the reports. The next day he replied to Holstein he would convey the content of his message to the Sublime Porte. On 12 July 1915 Wangenheim slightly adjusted the telegram, translated it to French, and sent it to Talât, who knew French. Wangenheim reproduced the exact wording of “wie Hammel abschlachten lassen” as “égorgé comme des moutons”.⁴¹⁶

After this sequence of written communication, Talât officially reproached Reşid for ‘overdoing’ the carnage. Several instances of reprehensions are especially significant as they contain intimations of the scope of the massacres. On the same day Talât received Wangenheim’s message about the indiscriminate killings in Diyarbekir province, he dispatched the following telegram to Dr. Reşid:

Lately it has been reported that massacres have been organized against the Armenians of the province and Christians without distinction of religion, and that recently for example people deported from Diyarbekir together with the Armenians and the Bishop of Mardin and seven hundred persons from other Christian communities have been taken out of town at night and slaughtered like sheep, and that an estimated two thousand people have been massacred until now, and if this is not ended immediately and unconditionally, it has been reported that it is feared the Muslim population of the neighbouring provinces will rise and massacre all Christians. It is absolutely unacceptable for the disciplinary measures and policies procured to the Armenians to include other Christians as this would leave a very bad impression upon public opinion and therefore these types of incidents that especially threaten the lives of all Christians need to be ended immediately, and the truth of the conditions needs to be reported.⁴¹⁷

In this important telegram, Talât not only literally reproduced Holstein’s words “slaughtered like sheep,” but also used the euphemism “disciplinary measures and policies” to endorse what Reşid had been doing correctly so far: destroying the Armenians of Diyarbekir.

In July, Reşid’s excesses became notorious among anyone that even came near his province as it was strewn with corpses. The governor of Bagdad, Süleyman Nazif (1870-1927), a noted intellectual hailing from Diyarbekir traveled to his hometown in this period. Nazif later wrote that the pungent smell of decaying corpses pervaded the atmosphere and that the bitter stench clogged his nose, making him gag.⁴¹⁸ Nazif had seen the exception to the rule, because most bodies were disposed of in the rivers Euphrates and Tigris. Rößler wrote that the “Vorbeitreiben von Leichen auf dem Euphrat” had been going on for 25 days, adding: “Die Leichen waren alle in der gleichen Weise, zwei und zwei Rücken auf Rücken gebunden”.⁴¹⁹ Cemal Paşa, in charge of the Syrian region south of Diyarbekir, reproached Dr. Reşid with an urgent and personal telegram on 14 July, complaining that “the corpses floating down the Euphrates are probably those of the Armenians killed in the rebellion, these need to be buried on the spot, leave no corpses out in the

⁴¹⁶ *PAAA*, Botschaft Konstantinopel 169, Wangenheim to Talât, 12 July 1915.

⁴¹⁷ *BOA*, DH.ŞFR 54/406, Talât to Reşid, 12 July 1915.

⁴¹⁸ Kocahanoğlu, *İttihat ve Terakki* [n.372], pp.522-23.

⁴¹⁹ *PAAA*, R14087, Rößler to Bethmann Hollweg, 27 July 1915.

open”.⁴²⁰ Two days later Reşid answered Cemal by pointing out that the Euphrates bore little relation to Diyarbekir province, and that the floating corpses were coming from the Erzurum and Mamuret-ul Aziz directions. Reşid noted that burials were exceptional and that “those who were killed here are either being thrown into deep deserted caves or, as has been the case for the most part, are being burnt” (*ibrak*).⁴²¹ Faiz El-Ghusayn was a witness to the burning of dead bodies when he entered Diyarbekir province near Karapınar. He saw hundreds of bodies burned to ashes. He also saw that there were many women and children among the dead, consumed by fire.⁴²² The rumors of Diyarbekir having become an open-air cemetery reached Talât, who ordered Reşid on 3 August to “bury the deceased lying on the roads, throw their corpses into brooks, lakes, and rivers, and burn their property left behind on the roads”.⁴²³

Reşid did not pay much attention to, let alone seriously consider the wave of negative feedback and his reputation grew more and more nefarious. The German protests became much more explicit by the end of July. An employee at the German embassy wrote to the German Chancellor Bethmann-Hollweg a most explicit report which read: “Seit Anfang dieses Monats hat der Wali von Diarbekir, Reschid Bey, mit der systematischen Ausrottung der christlichen Bevölkerung seines Amtsbezirks, ohne Unterschied der Rasse und der Konfession, begonnen”.⁴²⁴ As reports of massacres poured into Mosul province, Walter Holstein became increasingly enraged and wrote a bitter telegram to his colleagues in Istanbul:

Jedermann weiß daß der Vali von Diarbekir beispielsweise die Seele der in seinem Vilajet vorgekommenen entsetzlichen Verbrechen an der Christenheit ist; jedermann annimmt mit Recht daß wir die Greuelthaten auch kennen und man fragt sich weshalb wir gestatten daß ein notorischer Massenmörder unbestraft und weiterhin Vali bleibe. Allein der Ausdruck unserer Mißbilligung der Greuel dürfte kaum genügen den uns kompromittierenden verschiedenen Auffassungen wirksam entgegenzutreten. Erst wenn wir die Pforte gezwungen haben die in Diarbekir Mardin Seert etc. in Beamtenstellungen sitzenden Verbrecher rücksichtslos zur Rechenschaft zu ziehen, und zwar schleunigst, erst dann fallen die Verdächtigungen gegen uns fort. Ich las in verschiedenen deutschen Zeitungen türkische amtliche Dementis der Christengreuel und bin erstaunt über die Naivität der Pforte daß sie glaubt die Tatsachen der Verbrechen türkischer Beamten durch krasse Lügen aus der Welt schaffen zu können. Die Welt hat Greuelthaten wie sie erweislich von Amtswegen im Vilajet Diarbekir begangen worden sind und werden noch nicht erlebt!⁴²⁵

This report too was forwarded to Talât, who began losing his patience, since he was forced to explain Reşid’s compromising and embarrassing actions to German officials. Reşid obviously hadn’t taken any measures to act according to his instructions a month ago. To clear things up, two days after Holstein’s cable, Talât sent a second telegram admonishing Reşid that the persecution and massacre of all Christians in the province was not permitted. He also urged him

⁴²⁰ Cemal to Reşid, 14 July 1915, quoted in: *Ibid.*, p.519.

⁴²¹ Reşid to Cemal, 16 July 1915, quoted in: *Ibid.*, p.519.

⁴²² Al-Ghusayn, *Martyred Armenia* [n.233], p.20.

⁴²³ Talât to Reşid, 3 August 1915, quoted in: Kocahanoğlu, *İtihat ve Terakki* [n.372], p.519.

⁴²⁴ PAAA, R14086, Hohenlohe-Langenburg to Bethmann-Hollweg, 31 July 1915.

⁴²⁵ PAAA, Botschaft Konstantinopel 170, Holstein to Embassy, 14 August 1915.

to dismantle the militia, that caused the provincial authorities to be held responsible for the killings.⁴²⁶ This was still not the end of Talât's reprimands to his zealous subordinate. It had become clear that Reşid had not only persecuted and murdered non-Armenian Ottoman Christians, but also non-Ottoman Armenians. His indiscriminate slaughter of *ethnic* Armenians without consideration of *political* identity became a serious problem. One of these was Stepan Katosian, an Armenian-American who had summarily been put to death in the Diyarbekir prison. The execution probably caused a diplomatic riot since the Ottoman Empire was not at war with the United States, in which case it still would have been a legal violation. Talât therefore asked Reşid for information about Katosian's execution.⁴²⁷ To assure that this was the last instance in which Reşid transgressed international law, Talât ordered the consistent screening of the political identities of Armenians from then on.⁴²⁸ The purpose of this order was for non-Ottoman Armenians not to be persecuted. For example, an Iranian Armenian named Mıgırdiç Stepanian was allowed to leave for Persia via Mosul.⁴²⁹

Apart from specific instructions readjusting Reşid's extreme behaviour, Talât released several national decrees defining the categorical scope of those to be persecuted and deported. At first, he excluded the Armenian converts to Islam from deportation to the south.⁴³⁰ Most converts were not persecuted anymore and, provided they kept their silence, were allowed to continue living in their homes. Two weeks later he reincorporated the converts into the deportation program. Talât's order read that "some Armenians are converting collectively or individually just to remain in their hometowns," and that "this type of conversions should never be lent credence to". Talât contended that "whenever these type of people perceive threats to their interests they will convert as a means of deception".⁴³¹ On 4 August Talât excluded the Armenian Catholics from deportation, requesting their numbers in the respective provinces.⁴³² On 15 August the Protestant Armenians were excluded too from deportation to Der Zor. Again, Talât requested statistical data.⁴³³ Besides these official directions, the general methodology of the genocide consisted of killing the men and deporting those women and children who were not absorbed into Muslim households. This means that in general, Armenian women were not to be subjected to the immediate on-the-spot killing as the men were.⁴³⁴ Finally, a specific order

⁴²⁶ BOA, DH.ŞFR 54-A/248, Talât to Reşid, 16 August 1915.

⁴²⁷ BOA, DH.ŞFR 56/131, Talât to Reşid, 24 September 1915.

⁴²⁸ BOA, DH.ŞFR 57/50, Talât to Reşid, 17 October 1915. Talât later specified the order and requested information on "Armenian officials employed at consulates of allied and neutral countries". BOA, DH.ŞFR 70/152, Talât to provinces, 30 November 1916.

⁴²⁹ BOA, DH.ŞFR 57/57, Talât to Reşid, 17 October 1915. Whereas his superordinate Talât was scolding him continuously, two days later Reşid received an appreciative telegram from his subordinate Halil Edib in Mardin. Edib expressed his praise on the Eid el-Adha (*kurban bayramı*), the important Muslim festival involving sacrifice of cattle: "I congratulate you with your Eid, and kiss your hands that have gained us the six provinces and opened up the gateways to Turkistan and the Caucasus." Halil Edib to Reşid, 19 October 1915, quoted in: Bilgi, *Dr. Mehmed Reşid* [n.208], p.29, footnote 73.

⁴³⁰ BOA, DH.ŞFR 54/100, Talât to provinces, 22 June 1915.

⁴³¹ BOA, DH.ŞFR 54/254, Talât to provinces, 1 July 1915.

⁴³² BOA, DH.ŞFR 54-A/252, Talât to provinces, 4 August 1915.

⁴³³ BOA, DH.ŞFR 55/20, Talât to provinces, 15 August 1915.

⁴³⁴ Katharine Derderian, "Common Fate, Different Experience: Gender-Specific Aspects of the Armenian Genocide, 1915-1917," in: *Holocaust and Genocide Studies*, vol.19, no.1 (2005), pp.1-25.

excluding the Jacobite Syriacs from deportation was issued for those provinces with Syriac communities.⁴³⁵

2.5 Widening and narrowing scopes of persecution

There is contradictory evidence on the precise nature of Reşid's local implementation of Talât's national instructions. On the one hand, Reşid observed the commands for exclusion of non-Armenian Christians from further genocidal destruction; on the other hand, he disregarded all narrowing of victim categories. According to an other interpretation it is conceivable that the series of rebukes compelled him to mitigate the persecution, even though the harm was done. In other words, Reşid discontinued the persecution of the non-Armenian Christian communities when they had already been largely destroyed. These restrictions of time may have added to restrictions of location. It is also possible that this turn of events only happened in and around Diyarbakir city, since in Mardin İbrahim Bedri, Aziz Feyzi, and Memduh Bey had taken over the district. The most compelling example of selective persecution, steered from above is the causal link between Holstein's telegram of 12 June and the fate of the second convoy of Mardin notables. In that chain of events Reşid indeed seems to have followed orders and limited the scope of the genocide.

One of the first villages that had been thoroughly destroyed was Kabiye. According to one survivor from that village, a group of survivors from all over the Diyarbakir plain had assembled in Qarabash some time after the massacre, probably around mid-June. Pirinçizâde Sıdkı had drawn up a list of these survivors and had the list read out loud in front of the group. Those with Armenian names were carefully selected from those with Syriac names. Sıdkı declared that the Syriacs were exempted from persecution on orders of the government. When a young man named Dikran was also placed into the Armenian group he protested to Sıdkı, pleading that he was a Syriac Orthodox. Although he had spoken the truth, his protests were futile as he was lead away with the rest of the Armenians and butchered.⁴³⁶ The survivors of the second Mardin convoy had been in prison for a week when Memduh Bey arrived one day and ordered all cells opened. The cells were opened and the prisoners were led outside, where Memduh addressed them: "Those of your who are Syriac, Chaldean, and Protestant, raise your hands and state your names". The Syriacs, Chaldeans, and Protestants were selected from the Armenians and were allowed to go home.⁴³⁷ A similar selection was remembered by a Syriac survivor from a labour

⁴³⁵ BOA, DH.ŞFR 57/112, Talât to the provinces of Diyarbakir, Bitlis, Haleb, and Urfa, 25 October 1915. A year later, an even more lenient instruction was issued towards the Syriacs, requesting information about their numbers and at the same time allowing them to travel within the country for the sake of trade. BOA, DH.ŞFR 68/98, Mamuret-ul Aziz, Diyarbakir, Bitlis, Musul, and Urfa, 23 September 1916. Although tens of thousands of Syriacs had been massacred by that time, it did save a terrified and traumatized remnant of the Syriac community to live in their native regions. Still, their relative comfort was probably contingent on the appointment of Süleyman Necmi, Reşid's successor in Diyarbakir. The new governor was very merciful compared to Reşid, and permitted the Syriacs a breath before İbrahim Bedreddin became governor of Diyarbakir province and launched a second attack against the Syriacs of Tur Abdin.

⁴³⁶ Jastrow, *Die mesopotamisch-arabischen* [n.255], pp.327-29.

⁴³⁷ Armalto, *Al-Qousara* [n.181], p.54.

battalion working on road construction near Akpınar, between Diyarbekir and Mardin. On 17 June Sıdkı reportedly arrived at the road-building site where he separated the Armenians from the other Christians. An Armenian named Migirditch from Qarabash village was moved to the Armenian side but claimed to be a Syriac Orthodox. Though his identity was confirmed by a native of Qarabash, Sıdkı did not believe him and cursed at him: “Filthy dog, your name is Migirditch and you are supposed to be a Syriac?!” The unfortunate man was then sent off to his death with the other Armenians.⁴³⁸ A Syriac conscript in a labour battalion working between Urfa and Diyarbekir in mid-August related to the Swiss missionary Jacob Künzler:

«Am Abend», so erzählte der Syrer, «war aus der Stadt eine grosse Schar gut bewaffneter Gendarmen gekommen. Sie ordneten sofort Trennung der Armenier von den Syrern an. Alsdann wurden die Armenier zusammengebunden und etwa eine Viertelstunde weit weggeführt. Bald hörte man viele Schüsse. [...] Es war uns klar, dass unsere armenischen Kameraden jetzt abgeschlachtet wurden. [...] Als die Gendarmen ins Dorf zurückkehrten, dachten wir Syrer, dass nun die Reihe auch an uns kommen würde. Wir hatten uns mit Laternen zu versehen, und mussten in der Richtung des Abschachteplatzes gehen. [...] Wir mussten die getöteten Armenier in einen tiefen Brunnen werfen. Es waren unter ihnen mehrere, welche noch atmeten, einer konnte sogar noch laufen, er stürzte sich freiwillig in den Brunnen. Als die Toten und Halbtoten alle versenkt waren, mussten wir den Brunnen vermauern und Erde und Asche darauf häufen».⁴³⁹

These instances of selection of Armenians illustrate that Reşid delegated the implementation of Talât’s orders to Sıdkı. After Talât’s telegrams, some form of selective killing seems to have been applied.

These telling examples notwithstanding, there is also evidence that runs counter to Reşid’s ostensible pardon to non-Armenian Christians after Talât’s telegrams. The case of the Q’sor massacre shows that orders for differentiation between Christians were simply brushed aside. Reportedly, the executioner of Q’sor, Nuri Ensari, had personally proclaimed the “amnesty” (*ağ*) accorded to the Syriacs, while the predominantly Syriac and Catholic village had just been exterminated and was at that time still being razed.⁴⁴⁰ The same treatment befell the Christian women and children, who were supposed to be excluded from immediate massacre as routine. As early as in June, Aleppo Consul Jackson reported about the village of Redwan that “they even killed little children”.⁴⁴¹ A deportation convoy trudging to Mardin was halted by Reşid’s militia at the village of Golikê, where dozens of women were first raped and then killed.⁴⁴² Reportedly Reşid himself “took 800 children, enclosed them in a building and set light to it,” burning the children alive.⁴⁴³

⁴³⁸ Qarabashi, *Dmo Zliho* [n.199], pp.69-70.

⁴³⁹ Künzler, *Im Lande des Blutes und der Tränen* [n.336], pp.47-48.

⁴⁴⁰ Yeghiayan, *British Foreign Office Dossiers* [n.152], p.230.

⁴⁴¹ Jackson to Morgenthau, 8 June 1915, in: Sarafian, *United States* [n.250], p.60.

⁴⁴² Qarabashi, *Dmo Zliho* [n.195], p.72; Reportedly, Aziz Feyzi became known for his idiosyncratic habit of collecting trophies from female victims. On several occasions he had the militia retrieve a necklace of women’s nipples and a rope of women’s hair. *Épisodes des massacres* [n.272], p.50; Yeghiayan, *British Foreign Office Dossiers* [n.152], p.152.

⁴⁴³ *Morning Post*, 7 December 1918, quoted in: Vahakn N. Dadrian, “Children as Victims of Genocide: the Armenian Case,” in: *Journal of Genocide Research*, vol.5 (2003), pp.430, 436 footnote 24.

The few Greeks were not spared either. The wife of a Catholic Greek citizen of Diyarbekir complained to German vice consul Rößler she hadn't heard from her husband Yorgi Obégi ever since he, her daughter, and four of her brothers had went into hiding with a Muslim colleague in Diyarbekir. It became known that they were found and deported, but shortly outside of Diyarbekir stripped of their valuables and killed. The Greek Orthodox Priest of Diyarbekir had disappeared without a trace, and was probably murdered as well. Rößler was informed by an Ottoman officer that the then police chief of Diyarbekir, most probably Memduh Bey, had confessed the murder: "le commissaire lui aurait dit qu'il les a tué lui même".⁴⁴⁴ In the Silvan district, 425 Greeks out of a total 583 were killed.⁴⁴⁵

The most compelling evidence supporting the interpretation that Talât's orders were ignored are the massacres organized in Nusaybin and Cizre. On 16 August 1915 İbrahim Bedri sent militia officer Abdulkadir and chieftain of the Deşi tribe Abdulaziz to Nusaybin.⁴⁴⁶ They incarcerated all Christian men of Nusaybin with no distinction of denomination: Syriac Jacobites, Chaldeans, Protestants, and Armenians. In the middle of the night the men were lead away to a desolate canyon, butchered one by one, and thrown into the ravine. Many were decapitated, and each victim was urged to convert to Islam before being killed and hurled down the abyss.⁴⁴⁷ Hanna Shouha, the Chaldean priest of Nusaybin, had already been deported to Kharput and died on the road. His wife was violated and killed, his family was sent to Mardin and Diyarbekir and were eliminated either on the road or on arrival. Within two days, the population of Nusaybin dropped from 2000 to 1200, as 800 Christians were destroyed. The Jewish community of 600 persons was left unharmed.⁴⁴⁸

Almost two weeks later Cizre was targeted. On orders of Reşid, deputies Zülfü Bey and Aziz Feyzi had toured the province in April 1915 to organize the genocide. They had also frequented Cizre and had spoken to local Kurdish leaders.⁴⁴⁹ On 29 August, Aziz Feyzi lead a group of men including the mufti of Cizre Ahmed Hilmi and Reman chieftain Ömer in the attack.⁴⁵⁰ All Christian men were arrested and tortured under the pretext that they had arms hidden in secret depots. They were then cuffed with ropes and chains, and marched out the city, where they were stripped of their belongings and murdered. The naked bodies were dumped downstream in the Tigris, for an obvious reason: the killers did not want the victims' relatives to see the corpses and panic. Two days later the families were placed on *kelek* rafts and sent off,

⁴⁴⁴ PAAA, R14087, Rößler to Bethmann-Hollweg, 3 September 1915, enclosure no.2. Additionally, Memduh seems to have murdered a Russian and a Brit. The murdered Brit was probably Albert Atkinson, a missionary. Talât later asked Reşid questions on his whereabouts. BOA, DH.ŞFR 56/238, Talât to Reşid, 30 October 1915.

⁴⁴⁵ Noel, *Diary of Major E. Noel* [n.282], part 2, p.1.

⁴⁴⁶ Rhétoré, *Les chrétiens aux bêtes!* [n.164], p.220.

⁴⁴⁷ Hori Süleyman Hınno, *Farman: Tur'Abdinli Süryanilerin Katliamı 1914-1915* (Athens: n.p., 1993), pp.30-33.

⁴⁴⁸ Armalto, *Al-Qousara* [n.181], pp.97-98. Qarabashi, *Dmo Zliho* [n.199], pp.124-25.

⁴⁴⁹ *Épisodes des massacres* [n.272], p.14. On his way back to Diyarbekir, Feyzi reportedly visited the Reman district and convinced the brothers Ömer and Mustafa that the time had come to destroy all Christians.

⁴⁵⁰ PRO, FO 371/4191, 9 April 1919, reproduced in: Ahmet Mesut (ed.), *İngiliz Belgelerinde Kürdistan 1918-1958* (İstanbul: Doz, 1992), p.29. For biographical information on the then Muslim clerics of Cizre see: Abdullah Yaşın, *Bütün yönleriyle Cizre* (Cizre: n.p., 1983), pp.147-65.

after local Muslims had selected children. Their river journey was short, as their vessels were moored at a Kurdish village shortly downstream. Most women were raped, shot dead, and thrown in the river.⁴⁵¹ The pollution the decaying corpses caused to the Tigris was of such a nature that the population of Mosul was forbidden to drink from the river for a month.⁴⁵² In Cizre, the only survivors were four women absorbed in a Muslim household. Three of them were killed after all. The other, Afife Mimarbashi, bribed her kidnapper and fled to Mardin as the only survivor of the Cizre massacre.⁴⁵³ A total of 4750 Armenians (2500 Gregorians, 1250 Catholics, 1000 Protestants), 250 Chaldeans, and 100 Jacobite Syriacs were killed.⁴⁵⁴ A week after the mass murder, Holstein reported to his superiors that “Banden von Kurden, die zu diesem Zwecke von Feyzi Bey, Deputierten von Diarbekir angeworben waren, unter Duldung der Ortsbehörden und Teilnahme des Militärs die gesamte christliche Einwohnerschaft der Stadt Djeziré (Vilajet Diarbekir) niedergemetzelt haben”.⁴⁵⁵

It is evident that the indiscriminate killings were by no means spontaneous outbursts of local popular bloodlust. Talât's telegraphic reprimands had arrived late, and were not taken into consideration. As the Interior Minister, he was aware of this, as he was continuously being informed of this fact by German officials in Istanbul, who noted “dass die Weisungen der türkischen Regierung an die Provinzialbehörden infolge deren Willkür zum grössten Teil ihren Zweck verfehlten”.⁴⁵⁶ In the summer of 1915, all Christian communities of Diarbekir were equally struck by the genocide, although the Armenians were often particularly singled out for immediate destruction. As Norman Naimark wrote: “Protestant and Catholic Armenians could be formally exempted from deportation, even if in practice local authorities made no distinction among the various Christian sects”.⁴⁵⁷ Consul Rößler's reported that the Ottoman government lost “die Herrschaft über die von ihr gerufenen Elemente”.⁴⁵⁸ These ‘elements’, as Rößler described the genocidal measures, proved particularly ferocious in Diarbekir province. Major Noel was aware of this, as he remarked about the Syriacs:

In Diarbekir itself the Syrian Jacobites were scarcely molested. Of all the Christian communities they know how best to get on with the Turks, and when the massacres were ordered they were officially excluded. In the districts, however, the Government very soon lost control of the passions they had loose (if they ever wanted to keep them in control), with the result that the Jacobites suffered there as much as anybody else.⁴⁵⁹

⁴⁵¹ Armalto, *Al-Qousara* [n.181], pp.89-90.

⁴⁵² Jean-Marie Merigoux, *Va a Ninive! Un dialogue avec l'Irak: Mosul et les villages chrétiens, pages d'histoire dominicaine* (Paris: Cerf, 2000), p.462.

⁴⁵³ Sarafian, “The Disasters” [n.242].

⁴⁵⁴ PAAA, Botschaft Konstantinopel 170, Hohenlohe-Langenburg to Auswärtige Amt, 11 September 1915.

⁴⁵⁵ PAAA, Botschaft Konstantinopel 170, Holstein to Embassy, 9 September 1915.

⁴⁵⁶ PAAA, R14093, “Aufzeichnung über die Armenierfrage,” Berlin, 27 September 1916.

⁴⁵⁷ Norman Naimark, *Fires of Hatred: Ethnic Cleansing in Twentieth-Century Europe* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), pp.41-42.

⁴⁵⁸ PAAA, R14087, Rößler to Bethmann Hollweg, 27 July 1915.

⁴⁵⁹ Noel, *Diary of Major E. Noel* [n.282], part 2, p.14.

Contrary to R  b  ler's notion, Re  sid had a firm control of his murderous infrastructure. Especially in and around Diyarbekir district, most instances of massacre in which the militia engaged were directly ordered by himself. An exploration of the perpetrators involved, the timing, scope, and methodology of the killings clearly reveals Re  sid's will propelling them. Due to his personal disposition, Dr. Mehmed Re  sid gave a distinct shape to the genocide, configuring the scopes of victims from the outset, even when Tal  t modified them.

Chapter 3: Deportations of Kurds and settlement of Muslims

The winter of 1915-1916 was a harsh season in Diyarbakir province. The Christians of the province had been effectively destroyed and dozens of villages were desolate.⁴⁶⁰ Since the majority of the victims were peasants, the genocide caused an unprecedented bad harvest in the hinterland, causing the remaining people to starve. In many villages people often ate plain grass or hay and even lacked the means to bake acorn bread, normally the simplest staple food.⁴⁶¹ They were considered lucky as others had no other choice than to resort to cannibalism. In Diyarbakir city, food was so scarce that people were seen picking human flesh with knives out of the heaps of corpses laying along the city walls. The desperate city dwellers often ate the flesh without preparation.⁴⁶² These conditions in Diyarbakir were not regional but part of a national crisis.⁴⁶³ Governor Reşid seemingly did not pursue any attempts to alleviate the people's suffering. He was removed from office and appointed governor of Ankara on 1 March 1916. The governor of Ankara, Süleyman Necmi Bey, replaced him as governor of Diyarbakir.⁴⁶⁴

Health conditions were terrible and curable illnesses quickly lead to death as medicine was scarce and prioritized to the army.⁴⁶⁵ The corpses of the many who had died from persecution, starvation, and illness were seldom buried but thrown into wells and rivers, causing cholera, dysentery, and typhoid epidemics.⁴⁶⁶ Local Muslims named these contagious diseases “the Armenian disease” because Armenian convoys were dying as a result of them.⁴⁶⁷ The epidemic did not only strike the persecuted population, unpersecuted locals were often contaminated too. Aware of the criminal nature of popular participation in the genocide, the widespread outbreak was interpreted by Muslims as a “punishment of God” for the massacring. In september 1916, the death toll of the epidemic rose to 250 people every day, most of the victims being soldiers, gendarmes, and refugees. In the same month 4000 people perished of disease in Mardin, and in November, the body count numbered an additional 850.⁴⁶⁸ According to Ishak Armalto, from

⁴⁶⁰ In 1916, the majority of surviving Armenian deportees were concentrated in several open-air concentration camps along the Euphrates river in the Syrian desert. Tens of thousands were dying as a result of deliberate exposure to epidemics and starvation. Still, Talât's faction resumed the deportations with genocidal massacres in the spring of 1916, setting off a 'second phase' of the genocide. Raymond Kévorkian, “L'extermination des déportés arméniens ottomans dans les camps de concentration de Syrie-Mésopotamie (1915-1916), la deuxième phase du génocide,” in: *Revue d'Histoire Arménienne Contemporaine*, vol.2 (1998), pp.7-61. The Syriac groups that had sought refuge in the Tur Abdin mountains were met with a second military attack in 1917, and despite German pressure and armed self-defense small-scale systematic massacring was carried out there. Sébastien de Courtois, *Le génocide oublié: Chrétiens d'Orient, les derniers araméens* (Paris: Ellipses, 2002), pp.168-76.

⁴⁶¹ *Seyfo Center Archives* (Enschede), transcript of an interview with Abdallah Goge (approximately aged 110) of B'sorino village (Midyat district, Mardin province), conducted by Sabri Atman in Aramaic, in Gronau (Germany) on 17 February 2004.

⁴⁶² Beysanoğlu, *Diyarbakir Tarihi* [n.141], p.787.

⁴⁶³ American Committee for Armenian and Syrian Relief, *The Most Terrible Winter the World Has Ever Known* (New York: American Committee for Armenian and Syrian Relief, 1917).

⁴⁶⁴ *BOA*, MV 241/277, 1 March 1916.

⁴⁶⁵ Victor Schilling, *Kriegshygienische Erfahrungen in der Türkei (Cilicien, Nordsyrien)* (Leipzig: J.A. Barth, 1921).

⁴⁶⁶ The sewer system of Diyarbakir is a refined network of cisterns and drainages that regulates the aquatic infrastructure of the city. Water is tapped from springs and the Tigris, flowing east along the city, and directed into the city from the north, leaving the city from the south through what the locals call “the forbidden stream” (*haram su*). Due to the epidemics, the water became polluted, affecting its health for years. İbrahim Halil, “Sihhat Meseleleri: Şehrimizin Suları,” in: *Küçük Mecmua*, vol.8 (24 July 1922), pp.18-20.

⁴⁶⁷ Interview with a Veli Dede (aged 90) of Holbiş village (Kâhta district, Adıyaman province), conducted on 22 July 1990 in Kurdish by a Hacı İbrahim, published in: Kemal Yalçın, *Seninle güler yüreğim* (Bochum: CIP, 2003), pp.371-76.

⁴⁶⁸ Rhétoré, *Les chrétiens aux bêtes!* [n.164], pp.352, 367-76.

March 1916 to September 1917 the total amount of dead increased to 25,000, and another 2000 died from October 1917 to autumn 1918.⁴⁶⁹

Regardless of these difficulties, the war raged daily on the different fronts. For Diyarbekir province, the clashes with the Russian army as well as the desert war with the British army bore significance due to their proximity to the province. After the disaster of Sarıkamış, the Third Army was driven back and fought bitterly to defend Erzurum, the gateway between Anatolia and the Caucasus. When that important Ottoman city fell on 16 February 1916, it caused a shock not only among Ottoman officials. A British military observer with the Russian Army wrote about the fall of Erzurum: "Every bazaar from Shiraz to Samarkand, from Konia to Kuldja, began talking of the great Urus, who had taken Erzerum from the Osmanlı".⁴⁷⁰ The Russian army steamrolled over Muş and captured Bitlis on 2 March. Diyarbekir now gained military importance as the front was only 200 kilometres to the east of the city. Enver Paşa personally visited Diyarbekir on 10 May 1916 to discuss the war with Ahmed İzzet Paşa, commander of the Second Army.⁴⁷¹ Colonel Mustafa Kemal Paşa, the courageous hero of the defense of Gallipoli, was put in charge of the 16th Corps of that Army. Although he suffered heavy losses, he managed to repel General Nazarbekov's forces to the north of Lake Van. On 8 August 1916 Kemal Paşa humbly reported the recapture of Bitlis and Muş.⁴⁷² The ensuing constellation was a form of stalemate and maintained the status-quo for several months on the Russian front.⁴⁷³ The British imperial army had landed in Basra and was advancing northwards, threatening Bagdad and Jerusalem, while at the same time conducting intelligence operations to persuade Arab elites to discontinue any loyalty to the Ottoman government. The British Mesopotamian Expeditionary Force suffered a serious setback at Kut Al-Amara, as Halil Paşa's veteran soldiers finally defeated General Townshend's forces on 29 April 1916.⁴⁷⁴

Nevertheless, the Allied military campaigns were productive, and triggered the elaboration of existing plans to divide the Ottoman Empire between the Entente Powers. On 16 May 1916 the Sykes-Picot Agreement was officially concluded by Sir Edward Grey and Paul Cambon. This agreement, unofficially reached in January, stipulated the division of the Ottoman Empire into areas of influence for Great Britain and France. It assigned France control over modern Syria and Lebanon, whereas much of Palestine and modern Israel was to remain under international control. There was some mention of the possibility of cessation of land to establish an Arab state in the Arabian peninsula, but in general France and Britain were to remain in control of the key locations. Ultimately, the western powers were in charge, either directly or through Arab elites

⁴⁶⁹ Armalto, *Al-Qousara* [n.181], p.106.

⁴⁷⁰ Morgan Price, "The Russian Capture of Erzerum" (16 February 1916), in: Charles F. Horne (ed.), *The great events of the great war: A comprehensive and readable source record* (New York: National Alumni, 1923), vol.IV (1916).

⁴⁷¹ Beyzanoğlu, *Diyarbakir Tarihi* [n.141], p.801.

⁴⁷² Mustafa Kemal Paşa to Second Army Headquarters, 8 August 1916, in: Usman Eti, *Güneydoğu* (Ankara: Cumhuriyet, 1938), p.52.

⁴⁷³ William E.D. Allen & Pavel P. Muratov, *Caucasian battlefields: a history of the wars on the Turco-Caucasian border 1828-1921* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1953), pp.421-29.

⁴⁷⁴ Charles V.F. Townshend, *My campaign in Mesopotamia* (London: Butterworth, 1920).

charged with the duty and invested with powers requisite to carry out regulations. The crux of the matter was to secure all kinds of freedoms and privileges for British and French commercial interests. The conduct of railways, water supplies, oil fields, port facilities, and customs tariffs were some of the elements specified in the 12 articles of the covenant.⁴⁷⁵

In the Ottoman parliament, which had become little more than the CUP's clubhouse, the imperial designs were furiously reviled. According to Talât, the Turkish nation was waging a war of "independence and liberation" (*istiklâl ve istihlâs*).⁴⁷⁶ Other than waging war on many fronts, the CUP elite proceeded implementing its program of modernization and ethnic homogenization. Throughout the year 1916 Talât consolidated his dictatorship, appointing his loyalists to key positions and purging 'non-national' elements. The Minister of Interior set the crown on his diligence when he became Grand Vizier on 4 February 1917. Having risen to his new position, Talât initiated several judicial, administrative, cultural, and social reforms. On 15 February he addressed the parliament and read his cabinet's program to the deputies:

Gentlemen, we know that our nation, in very tight interaction with European civilization, is existentially connected by alliance to the Central Powers and cannot remain indifferent to the necessities of civilization and modernity. Victory in the war is necessary, both for national security and for reform and innovation. We will walk toward this goal with firm determination (applause).⁴⁷⁷

The modernizing effort consisted for example of secularizing the religious courts (*ser'iye*) and its canonical laws. With restricted jurisdiction they were placed under the Ministry of Justice, and Muslim clerics disappeared from parliament. Women and girls were encouraged to enlist in universities and primary schools, and participate in the labour market. They also gained more legal rights, such as the right to file for divorce.⁴⁷⁸ Along with secularization, the campaign also saw elements of westernization. There were experiments with the Latin alphabet, and in 1917 the Gregorian calendar was introduced.⁴⁷⁹ The 'national economy' was gradually beginning to display its contours, a 'National Bank' (*Millî Banka*) being established. The CUP also began developing a tangent national culture: a 'national library', 'national music', a 'national tourism agency', a 'national film industry', a 'national geography society', and a 'national museum' were but few of the institutions the CUP began creating.⁴⁸⁰ In addition to this construction of cornerstones of the new national identity, the ethnic restructuring continued. Deportation and assimilation programs were extended to the Muslim populations, one of these being the Kurds.

⁴⁷⁵ Marian Kent, *Oil and Empire: British Policy and Mesopotamian Oil, 1900-1920* (London: Macmillan, 1976), p.122; Christopher M. Andrew & Alexander S. Kanya-Forstner, *The climax of French imperial expansion, 1914-1924* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1981), pp.93-96.

⁴⁷⁶ Tunaya, *Türkiye'de Siyasal Partiler* [n.64], p.605.

⁴⁷⁷ Çavdar, *Talât Paşa* [n.17], p.390.

⁴⁷⁸ Niyazi Berkes, *The Development of Secularism in Turkey* (London: Hurst & Co., 1998), pp.367-428.

⁴⁷⁹ Jean Deny, "L'Adoption du calendrier grégorien en Turquie," in: *Revue du Monde Musulman*, vol.43 (1921), pp.46-49.

⁴⁸⁰ Tunaya, *Türkiye'de Siyasal Partiler* [n.57], p.66.

3.1 Deportations of Kurds, 1916

The CUP stance toward the Kurdish population of the Ottoman Empire was of a complex and diverse character. On the one hand, the Kurds were perceived to be Ottoman Muslims, therefore not to be excluded out of the new 'national' order. After all, among the first founders of the CUP there were several Ottoman-Kurdish intellectuals, such as Dr. Abdullah Cevdet (1869-1932)⁴⁸¹ and Dr. İshak Sükûti (1868-1902), the latter being a native of Diyarbekir. Moreover, the godfather of CUP nationalist ideology was none other than Ziyâ Gökalp, a Diyarbekir Kurd. In addition to these influential politicians, local CUP elites were often Kurds too, such as in Diyarbekir province. In the provincial capital, the Pirinçizâde dynasty had exhibited loyalty to CUP policy. In Mardin city, tribal leaders of the Deşi and Kiki tribes used the CUP (and vice versa) to push their agendas. Due to familial ties, ideological conformity, but especially political opportunism these Kurdish elites had for instance participated in and profited from the genocidal persecution of the Christians in that province.⁴⁸²

Apart from regional administrative institutions, the Ottoman army profited from Kurdish manpower as well. Reşid himself admitted in his memoirs that without the support of the Millî, Mîran, and Karakeçi tribes, generally located in the west of Diyarbekir province, it would not have been possible to provide the necessary resources and requisitions for the Ottoman army.⁴⁸³ In his memoirs, Commander of the Second Army Ahmed İzzet Paşa detailed some of his efforts to reach out to Kurdish tribal elites. According to İzzet, the stick-strategy had only alienated Kurdish tribesmen from the state, thus not produced the desired results. Therefore he had opted for the carrot-strategy to incorporate the tribes. Interestingly, he also wrote that one of the most successful Ottoman officials that had succeeded in gaining the Kurds was the notorious İbrahim Bedreddin, district governor of Mardin. Bedri had cajoled and bribed his way to strong personal friendships with several influential Cizre chieftains.⁴⁸⁴

Taking this bond between the CUP and Kurdish elites into consideration, the CUP seemingly had little to worry about concerning the Kurds. However, this loyalty problem was not as simple as it appeared at first sight. The key word was trust. There was fear for collaboration of powerful Kurdish tribes with the advancing Russian army, as well as with Armenian politicians. The CUP also fostered suspicion about Kurdish-nationalist and secessionist politics.⁴⁸⁵ The claims were not totally unfounded as both desertion, Kurdo-Armenian alliances, and nationalism existed. Therefore, the CUP remained on the look-out for of which Kurdish families and tribes were potentially loyal to the government and which ones were not. It then pre-emptively

⁴⁸¹ Mehmet Ş. Hanoğlu, *Bir siyasal düşünür olarak Doktor Abdullah Cevdet ve dönemi* (İstanbul: Üçdal, 1981).

⁴⁸² *International Institute for Social History* (Amsterdam), Hikmet Kıvılcımlı Archive, inventory no.56, "İhtiyat Kuvvet Milliyet (Şark)" (unpublished handwritten manuscript, 1932), p.20.

⁴⁸³ Reşid, *Mülâhazât* [n.209], p.82.

⁴⁸⁴ Ahmet İzzet Paşa, *Feryadım* (İstanbul: Nehir, 1992), vol.1, p.257.

⁴⁸⁵ According to the German journalist Harry Stürmer, who had had the opportunity to speak to CUP insiders during his two-year stay in Istanbul, the CUP feared the Kurds. Harry Stürmer, *Two Years in Constantinople* (London: Gomidas, 2004), p.7.

distrusted those they already suspected of disloyalty as a military precaution, just in case the tribes in question indeed crossed sides and joined the Russians. In that case, if a certain tribe was disloyal, a threat would have been eliminated; if the tribe was loyal after all, little was lost in CUP eyes. Obviously, their actions did not advance Kurdish trust in and loyalty to the CUP either.⁴⁸⁶ A concrete example of CUP distrust in local Kurdish elites for Diyarbakir province can be found in Ahmed İzzet Paşa's memoirs. The accomodating and liberal İzzet was shocked by an anecdote Mustafa Kemal Paşa had related him. When Kemal Paşa arrived in Hazro county to explore the region for warfare conditions, the mayor of Hazro told him confidentially that the local Kurdish elite was not to be trusted. The mayor suggested that the families needed to be "exterminated root and branch" (*kökünü kazımak*) as soon as possible.⁴⁸⁷

There are manifold reasons why the CUP engaged in large-scale deportations of Kurds. First, there were direct political reasons, namely to thwart off possible alliances between Kurdish tribes and the Russian army. Second, there were economic considerations: most Kurdish tribes were (semi-)nomadic and in order to tax them more effectively, they needed to be forcefully settled. Nationalist assimilation was a third concern the Ottoman Ministry of Interior fostered. In their efforts to 'nationalize', i.e. turkify the empire, the Kurds were targeted for cultural and linguistic assimilation, and political absorption into the Turkish nation. The combination between a long-term ideological program and short-term war exigencies drove the CUP to deport hundreds of thousands of Ottoman Kurds. The İAMM (renamed AMMU in 1916) supervised the deportation of these people. Those Kurds that had fled west from the Russian occupation were incorporated in the deportation program too.

The relationship between the Kurdish population of the Ottoman eastern provinces and Tsarist Russia had a long history. In the 16th century, the Ottoman government had waged war against Persia and to command a reliable border guard system, it had established large Kurdish emirates. In the Botan and Bitlis regions these functioned as a buffer zone against possible Persian incursions. From 1839 on, westernization and modernization saw the forced dismantlement of these *de facto* independent emirates.⁴⁸⁸ By the end of the 19th century, the Ottoman elite realized that their strong existence could have proven useful against Russia. After all, for several decades before the First World War, the Russian Empire had been encroaching on the eastern, predominantly Kurdo-Armenian region of the Ottoman Empire. Although Russian officials often initiated contact with Kurdish tribesmen, "it should be mentioned that the Kurds were not passive pawns, but that many Kurdish leaders eagerly sought Russian intervention as a

⁴⁸⁶ Naci Kutlay, *İttihat Terakki ve Kürtler* (Ankara: Beybün, 1992), pp.190-91.

⁴⁸⁷ İzzet Paşa, *Feryadım* [n.484], pp.273-74.

⁴⁸⁸ Hakan Özoğlu, *Kurdish Notables and the Ottoman State: Evolving Identities, Competing Loyalties, and Shifting Boundaries* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2004), chapter 3.

way to preserve their tribal privileges against a centralizing Ottoman state.”⁴⁸⁹ Ottoman intelligence quickly saw that the Russian strategy toward the Kurds resembled the Russian attitude toward the Cossacks. Russian generals recognized the martial aptitude of the Kurds, and therefore approached them within a military context.⁴⁹⁰

One of the Kurdish notables who sought collaboration with the Russian government was Yusuf Kâmil Bedirxan (1872-1934). Kâmil was a Kurdish nationalist who had participated in the organization of the 1914 Bitlis revolt. In May 1914 he was arrested by the Ottoman government for subversive activities. Just when the war began, he fled to Tbilisi with the assistance of Russian official Yakuchev and became an agent for Tsarist Russia. When its army occupied the Bitlis region in 1916 Kâmil functioned as an intermediary between the Kurdish population and the Russian authorities.⁴⁹¹ According to other accounts the Russian government assigned him ‘assistant governor’ (помощник; *namestnik*) of Bitlis and Erzurum.⁴⁹² After the war he settled in Tbilisi where he gave lessons and wrote books on the Kurdish language.⁴⁹³

Kâmil’s nephew Abdurrezzak Bedirxan (d. 1918) was equally in earnest about a Kurdish state under Russian auspices. Abdurrezzak evaded the draft and deserted to the Russians, assisting the Tsarist army in its Persian campaign. He was executed by the Ottoman army when he was captured in 1918.⁴⁹⁴ Hasan Fevzi was an other Bedirxan notable who had agitated against Ottoman rule and had openly flirted with both Russia and England. In 1912 he had founded a secret political party called *Îrşad* (“True Path”) and disseminated propaganda among the powerful Kurdish tribes of the Garzan region.⁴⁹⁵ Again, the CUP suspected him of recalcitrance and on 17 May 1916 Talât wired an order to Diyarbekir, requesting information on his political activities and prohibiting him to reside in that province.⁴⁹⁶ Talât apparently was not content with the information he received, for he answered that “if his deportation is necessary, he should be deported to an isolated county instead of Istanbul”.⁴⁹⁷ A week later he ordered his deportation to Konya, adding that he should be kept “in tight custody and under strict observation” (*sıkı bir nezâret ve tarassud altında*).⁴⁹⁸ Local officials in Konya were informed of his arrival and were admonished to hold him in maximum security conditions.⁴⁹⁹ These members of the Bedirxan tribe had openly disseminated their ideas in Istanbul or in the provinces before the war. The CUP

⁴⁸⁹ Michael Reynolds, “The Inchoate Nation Abroad: Tsarist Russia, Nation-Building, and the Kurds of Ottoman Anatolia, 1908-1914,” paper presented at the third annual conference of the *Central Eurasian Studies Society*, University of Wisconsin (Madison, WI), 17-20 October 2002. See also his: *The Ottoman-Russian Struggle for Eastern Anatolia and the Caucasus, 1908-1918: Identity, Ideology, and the Geopolitics of World Order* (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Princeton University, 2003).

⁴⁹⁰ İsmail Kurtcephe & Suat Akgül, “Rusyanın Birinci Dünya Savaşı Öncesinde Kürt Aşiretleri Üzerindeki Faaliyetleri,” in: *Ankara Üniversitesi Osmanlı Tarihi Araştırma ve Uygulama Merkezi Dergisi (OTAM)*, vol.6 (1995), pp.249-56.

⁴⁹¹ Mikhail Semenovitch Lazarev, *Pirsa Kurdan (1891-1917)* (Stockholm: Roja Nû, 1999), p.352. This book is a Kurdish translation of its Russian original: *Kurdskij vopros (1891-1917)* (Moscow: Akademija Nauk SSSR, Institut Vostokovedeniya, 1972).

⁴⁹² Chris Kutschera, *Le mouvement national kurde* (Paris: Flammarion, 1979), p.20.

⁴⁹³ Hesen Mizgîn, “Serpêhatiya Gora Kamil Bedirxan Begê Azîzî,” in: *Armanç*, no.121 (1991), p.5.

⁴⁹⁴ In 1960, Abdurrezzak’s unpublished memoirs were unearthed from the Russian imperial archives in St. Petersburg, translated from Russian into Kurdish by Prof. Dr. Celilê Celil, and published in Istanbul. Ebdurriqaz Bedirxan, *Autobiyoğrafîya* (Istanbul: Pêrî, 2000).

⁴⁹⁵ Celilê Celil, *Jiyana Rewşenbîrî û Siyasetî ya Kurdan (di dawîya sed sala 19’a û destpêka sed sala 20’a de)* (Uppsala: Jîna Nû, 1985), p.155.

⁴⁹⁶ *BOA*, DH.ŞFR 64/48, Talât to Diyarbekir, 17 May 1916.

⁴⁹⁷ *BOA*, DH.ŞFR 64/156, Talât to Diyarbekir, 30 May 1916.

⁴⁹⁸ *BOA*, DH.ŞFR 64/225, Talât to Diyarbekir, 6 June 1915.

was aware of their activities, and when concrete intelligence reports on them detailing their actions trickled into Istanbul, the entire tribe was declared undesirable. In June 1915 Talât ordered “that the Bedirxan family cannot be trusted, therefore the conscripts they recruit should not be benefited from”.⁵⁰⁰ A year later, Hacı Mirza, Kurdish chieftain of the Haydaran tribe and friendly to Abdurrezzak Bedirxan was targeted when his correspondence with Abdurrezzak was intercepted and Mirza and his tribal entourage was deported from Silvan to western Anatolia due to their “doubtful loyalty” (*sadakatî meşkûk*). Under strict security conditions he was separated from his tribesmen and settled in the west.⁵⁰¹

An other situation the CUP feared was a possible Armenian-Kurdish alliance. In March 1915 Talât requested information on the chances of armed Armenians and Kurds joining forces against the Ottoman government. In the case this was indeed a fact, he ordered pre-emptive action against possible cooperation between Armenians and Kurds.⁵⁰² Armenian and Kurdish nationalists were cognizant of the fact that their nationalist claims and actions were contingent on the success of cordial relations between Kurds and Armenians. These chances were slim, even though some contemporary Armenian nationalists such as Garo Sassouni repeatedly attempted to forge a Kurdo-Armenian coalition. In his monography on the history of Kurdish-Armenian relations, Sassouni lamented that “unfortunately, in this period Kurds and Armenians were unable to agree on rapprochement”.⁵⁰³ According to the contemporary Kurdish nationalist Dr. Nuri Dersimi, the unattainableness of a Kurdish and Armenian alliance was most of all a function of the Ottoman-Russian war. Dersimi wrote that Istanbul sought to use Kurdish tribes in the war and in the genocide, whereas Moscow applied a similar strategy, forming Armenian bands to keep the Kurds of Eastern Anatolia in restraint.⁵⁰⁴ The few Kurds that did collaborate with Armenians were mercilessly persecuted by the CUP. On 14 March 1915 Talât ordered Kör Hüseyin Paşa, chieftain of the Haydaran tribe and captain of a large Hamidiye regiment, surveilled because of his possible collaboration with Armenians in Van province.⁵⁰⁵ Similar orders were issued to Mamuret-ul Aziz province, where the CUP was aware of the *modus vivendi* between several Dersim tribes and Armenian citizens of Kharput.⁵⁰⁶ These Dersim tribes had sheltered and escorted Armenians north to Russian-occupied Erzincan.

Altogether, war exigencies, economic considerations, and assimilation policies led Ottoman Kurds to be deported *en masse*. On 2 May 1916 Talât Paşa issued the following order:

⁴⁹⁹ BOA, DH.ŞFR 65/21, Talât to Konya, 17 June 1915.

⁵⁰⁰ BOA, DH.ŞFR 53/344, Talât to Diyarbekir, 13 June 1915.

⁵⁰¹ BOA, DH.ŞFR 69/249, AMMU to Diyarbekir, 13 November 1916.

⁵⁰² BOA, DH.ŞFR 50/210, Talât to the provinces of Van, Bitlis, and Erzurum, 9 March 1915.

⁵⁰³ Garo Sassouni, *Kürt Ulusal Hareketleri ve 15. Yüzyıl'dan Günümüze Ermeni-Kürt İlişkileri* (Istanbul: Med, 1992), p.246. This book is a translation of the Armenian original *Kurd Azgayin Sharzhumnere ev Hay-Krdakan Haraberutyunnere* (Beirut: Hamazkayin, 1969).

⁵⁰⁴ Nuri Dersimi, *Dersim ve Kürt Milli Mücadelesine Dair Hatıratım* (Ankara: Öz-Ge, 1992), pp.44-45.

⁵⁰⁵ BOA, DH.ŞFR 51/14, Talât to Cevdet (governor of Van), 14 March 1915.

⁵⁰⁶ BOA, DH.ŞFR 53/222, Command Headquarters to Mamuret-ul Aziz province, 2 July 1915.

It is absolutely not allowable to send the Kurdish refugees to southern regions such as Urfa or Zor. Because they would either Arabize or preserve their nationality there and remain a useless and harmful element, the intended objective would not be achieved and therefore the deportation and settlement of these refugees needs to be carried out as follows.

- Turkish refugees and the turkified city dwellers need to be deported to the Urfa, Maraş, and Anteb regions and settled there.

- To preclude that the Kurdish refugees continue their tribal life and their nationality wherever they have been deported, the chieftains need to be separated from the common people by all means, and all influential personalities and leaders need to be sent separately to the provinces of Konya and Kastamonu, and to the districts of Niğde and Kayseri.

- The sick, the elderly, lonely and poor women and children who are unable to travel will be settled and supported in Maden town and Ergani and Behremaz counties, to be dispersed in Turkish villages and among Turks. [...]

- Correspondence will be conducted with the final destinies of the deportations, whereas the method of dispersion, how many deportees have been sent where and when, and settlement measures will all be reported to the Ministry.⁵⁰⁷

The deportation of Kurds had now begun, first of all targeting the Kurds deemed ‘disloyal’ by the CUP. When a group of mounted Kurds from Ahlat attempted to defect to the Russians, their deportation to Diyarbakir was ordered.⁵⁰⁸ Ahmed İzzet Paşa tried to prevent these deportations, suggesting to Talât that “tribal cavalry units” (*aşayir süvari fırkaları*) should be established instead.⁵⁰⁹ His efforts had limited success as the İAMM improvised a makeshift solution. In May, it authorized the temporary settlement of Kurdish chieftains and tribesmen in areas close to the front. This was a local solution between deployment in the war and deportation to the west.⁵¹⁰ Since thousands of Armenian villages were empty, Kurds perceived as more soundly loyal to the government were to be settled immediately. In Diyarbakir, Kurds enrolled in the tribal units were settled in the empty Christian villages around Mardin and Midyat.⁵¹¹ İAMM planners further authorized 280 members of the Zirkî tribe to settle with their families in empty villages in Derik district.⁵¹²

The socio-economic motivations of the deportations were related to the CUP’s agricultural policy. Having destroyed hundreds of thousands of (Armenian) peasants, the peasant population of the country needed to be replenished. In 1911, Diyarbakir deputy Aziz Feyzi had already suggested the tribes of the eastern provinces to be settled, in order to raise the revenue of the land, and to circumvent a possible German imperialist claim on that region.⁵¹³ In the 1917 CUP congress an agreement was signed on (re)settling the tribes and redefining the administration form of the settlements.⁵¹⁴ From then on, one would find specific references to agricultural policy in the deportation orders. On 14 October 1916 the AMMU ordered Kurdish tribesmen from Diyarbakir province deported to central Anatolia via Urfa, specifying that on arrival, the settlers

⁵⁰⁷ BOA, DH.ŞFR 63/172-173, Talât to Diyarbakir, 2 May 1916.

⁵⁰⁸ BOA, DH.ŞFR 57/275, İAMM to Diyarbakir, 3 November 1915.

⁵⁰⁹ İzzet, *Feryadım* [n.484], p.257.

⁵¹⁰ BOA, DH.ŞFR 64/80, İAMM to the provinces of Erzurum, Sivas, Mamuret-ul Aziz, and Mosul, 20 May 1916.

⁵¹¹ BOA, DH.ŞFR 57/328, İAMM to Bitlis, 7 November 1915.

⁵¹² Fuat Dündar, *İtihat ve Terakki’nin Müslümanları İskân Politikası (1913-1918)* (İstanbul: İletişim, 2002), p.143.

⁵¹³ *Meclis-i Mebusan Zabıt Ceridesi 1327* (1911), first election period, third sitting, hundred and fourteenth session, p.3537.

⁵¹⁴ Tanin, 21 September 1917, quoted in: Tunaya, *Türkiye’de Siyasal Partiler* [n.57], p.157.

were to be employed in the “farming industry” (*zər’iyat işleri*). They were to constitute between 5 and 10 percent of the local (Turkish) population.⁵¹⁵ Refugee-deportees who had fled the Russian occupation and had arrived in Diyarbekir province were supposed to work on the land too. The order read that the settlers were to be provided with pack animals and ploughs, in order for them to settle down and “begin agriculture immediately”.⁵¹⁶ Due to shortages in Diyarbekir, the AMMU ordered potato seeds to be imported from Elaziz.⁵¹⁷

Yet most İAMM/AMMU orders reveal that nationalist assimilation was the propelling force behind the deportations. German officials had understood what the CUP was pursuing in the war, as a German teacher wrote in September 1916:

Dem Jungtürken schwebt das europäische Ideal eines einheitlichen Nationalstaates vor. Die christlichen Nationen, Armenier, Syrer, Griechen, fürchtet er wegen ihrer kulturellen und wirtschaftlichen Ueberlegenheit und sieht in ihrer Religion ein Hindernis, sie auf friedlichem Wege zu turkifizieren. Sie müssen daher ausgerottet oder zwangsweise islamisiert werden. Die nicht-türkischen mohammedanischen Rassen, wie Kurden, Perser, Araber usw. hofft er auf dem Verwaltungswege und durch türkischen Schulunterricht unter Berufung auf das gemeinsame mohammedanische Interesse turkifizieren zu können.⁵¹⁸

When initiating the deportations, Talât personally paid attention to the efficiency of the Turkification project. In January 1916 he requested specific information on the Kurds living in more than a dozen provinces and districts. Talât wrote: “How many Kurdish villages are there, and where? What is their population? Are they preserving their mother tongue and original culture? How is their relationship with Turkish villagers and villages?”⁵¹⁹ In April he checked again, this time asking how and where which convoys were being deported, and whether the Kurdish deportees had begun speaking Turkish.⁵²⁰ These examples of correspondence are clear evidence on the nature of the deportations: they were a large-scale attack on Kurdish culture and language, constituencies that could define the Kurds as a nation and therefore pose a threat.

Again, Diyarbekir became a hub for deportation. The local İAMM officials were appointed by the İAMM headquarters in İstanbul but were subject to the governors. They enjoyed more rights than other officials as they had clearance to send ciphers without prior authorization.⁵²¹ Whereas in 1915 Armenians were concentrated in the city to be deported to the south, in 1916 Kurds were sent off to the west. For the Diyarbekir Kurds, the deportations were a one-way trip out of their native province as no Kurd was allowed to (re-)enter the province. According to historian Hilmar Kaiser, Diyarbekir became a ‘turkification zone’:

⁵¹⁵ *BOA*, DH.ŞFR 69/8, AMMU to Urfa, 14 October 1916.

⁵¹⁶ *BOA*, DH.ŞFR 69/235, AMMU to Diyarbekir, 12 November 1916.

⁵¹⁷ *BOA*, DH.ŞFR 72/180, AMMU to Elaziz, 8 February 1917.

⁵¹⁸ *PAAA*, R14093, Das Geheime Zivil-Kabinet des Kaisers (Valentini) an den Reichskanzler (Bethmann Hollweg), 10 September 1916, enclosure no.3.

⁵¹⁹ *BOA*, DH.ŞFR 60/140, Talât to the provinces of Konya, Kastamonu, Ankara, Sivas, Adana, Aydın, Trabzon, and districts of Kayseri, Canik, Eskişehir, Karahisar, Niğde, 26 January 1916.

⁵²⁰ *BOA*, DH.ŞFR 62/187, Talât to Sivas, 16 April 1916; *BOA*, DH.ŞFR 62/278, Talât to Adana, 9 April 1916.

⁵²¹ *BOA*, DH.ŞFR 72/222, AMMU to provinces, 13 February 1917.

Besides the ‘turkification’ of human beings, whole regions or critical localities were targeted as a second major aspect of the government’s program. Therefore, whole districts were designated as a ‘turkification region.’ Consequently, Ottoman officials did not allow Kurdish deportees arriving from the eastern borders areas in the province of Diarbekir [...] to remain there as Muslims from the Balkans had been earmarked as settlers for these regions.⁵²²

This strategy for Diarbekir regulated a segregation of refugee-deportees from Bitlis into ethnically Kurdish and Turkish. The Kurdish refugees were not allowed to stay in Diarbekir but forced to march on westward, whereas the Turkish ones were immediately settled in and around the provincial capital.⁵²³ The official order for deportation of indigenous Diarbekir Kurds fell on 20 May 1916, 18 days after Talât’s guidelines for deportation. The AMMU ordered “Kurdish tribes to be deported collectively to predetermined settlement areas”.⁵²⁴ First they were deported to Urfa,⁵²⁵ but after half a year Urfa became too full and they were rerouted back to Diarbekir and settled around Siverek.⁵²⁶ For all Kurdish deportees the general rule was applied that no one was allowed to return to Diarbekir before prior authorization from the Ministry. The settlements were to be permanent.⁵²⁷

The conduct of the deportation of Kurdish tribesmen and refugees stood in stark contrast with the Armenian deportation, a year before. Jakob Künzler witnessed convoys from Palu passing by in Urfa:

Die Behandlung dieser Kurden auf ihrem Deportationszuge unterschied sich von derjenigen der Armenier sehr wesentlich. Es geschah ihnen auf dem Wege kein Leid, niemand dürfte sie plagen. Aber das Furchtbarste war, dass die Deportationen mitten im Winter erfolgte. Kam so einen Kurdenzug abends in einem Türkendorf an, so schlossen die Einwohner aus Angst vor ihnen schnell ihre Haustüren zu. So mussten die Armen die Winternacht unter Regen und Schnee draussen verbringen. Am andern Morgen hatten dann die Dorfbewohner Massengräber für die Erfrorenen zu machen.⁵²⁸

The deportees were met with xenophobia by many Turkish villagers, who were not familiar with Kurdish tribesmen and therefore feared them. In the cities, the deportees were settled in the demolished Armenian neighbourhoods where they had no means to support themselves. After all, most Kurds were pastoralists and were not versed in agriculture and were often hostile to city life. The Kurdish author Yaşar Kemal was a toddler when his family fled from Van to Diarbekir,

⁵²² Hilmar Kaiser, “The Ottoman Government and the End of the Ottoman Social Formation, 1915-1917,” paper presented at the conference *Der Völkermord an den Armeniern und die Shoah*, University of Zürich, 7 November 2001, at: <<http://www.hist.net/kieser/aghet/Essays/EssayKaiser.html>>. The settlement of non-Kurdish Muslims in Diarbekir province will be addressed in the next paragraph.

⁵²³ BOA, DH.ŞFR 63/187, İAMM to Urfa, Maraş, Antep, 4 May 1916.

⁵²⁴ BOA, DH.ŞFR 64/77, İAMM to the provinces of Diarbekir, Mamuret-ul Aziz, Sivas, Erzurum, Mosul, 20 May 1916.

⁵²⁵ BOA, DH.ŞFR 69/7, AMMU to Diarbekir, 14 October 1916. The Swiss missionary Jakob Künzler was stationed in Urfa and noted “dass ich unter den Deportierten auch kurdische höhere Offiziere sah, welche zu Anfang des Krieges mutig im Felde gegen die Russen gekämpft hatten, und die nun die Behandlung durch die Türken als bittersten Undank empfanden.” Künzler, *Im Lande des Blutes und der Tränen* [n.336], p.101.

⁵²⁶ BOA, DH.ŞFR 74/22, AMMU to Diarbekir, 3 March 1917.

⁵²⁷ BOA, DH.ŞFR 63/283, İAMM to Mamuret-ul Aziz, 11 May 1916; For example, deportees arriving in Niğde were ordered to immediately register at the local population registry: BOA, DH.ŞFR 77/188, İAMM to Niğde, 19 April 1917; BOA, DH.ŞFR 85/262, AMMU to Diarbekir, 28 March 1918.

⁵²⁸ Künzler, *Im Lande des Blutes und der Tränen* [n.336], p.102.

and was further deported from Diyarbekir to Adana. In his memoirs he related the experiences of the child deportees: “Children were swarming around, hungry, miserable, and naked. [...] They were roaming around like flocks”.⁵²⁹ The Kurdish poet Cigerxwîn (1903-1984) was deported from Mardin to the south of Urfa, where he became an orphan when he lost his parents in the famine.⁵³⁰ A handful of missionaries and relief organizations passionately tried to help the deportees, appealing at consulates and local Muslim clerics, and providing food and shelter. Even though they left no stone unturned, due to the enormity of the deportation program their efforts were a bona fide drop in the ocean.⁵³¹

At that time, inflation was rampant and the black market flourished. Fraudulent CUP officials were massively embezzling funds designated for the population. Among them was Kara Kemal, who was fiddling under the cloak of ‘economic turkification’. The misappropriation became somewhat of a sport among a privileged few, creating a stratum living in unrestrained abundance. By the end of the war, the critical press even grumbled of a ‘class’ of officials who had become very rich and constituted a “war bourgeoisie” (*harb zengini*).⁵³² Among local AMMU officials too, corruption was expanding. Talât considered this utterly unacceptable because it counteracted the deportations and undermined the assimilation program. In November 1916 funds were appropriated for the local AMMU branches: 30,000 pounds were sent to Diyarbekir, 7000 to Siverek, and 7000 to Mardin.⁵³³ When the Ministry found out that the allotments were illegally exhausted by police chief Şeyhzâde Kadri Bey and by the vice district governor of Mardin, an investigation was ordered.⁵³⁴ An other corruption scandal was uncovered in Silvan, where the civil servants had neglected their work, causing many refugee-deportees to starve and live under conditions of utter misery.⁵³⁵ The AMMU headquarters soon found out that it was conscription officer of Silvan Salih Efendi and mayor of Silvan Cemilpaşazâde Adil Bey who were in charge of the embezzlements. They had appropriated the daily rations unequally, leaving the deportees “in an outrageously miserable and wretched state” (*fevkalâde sefil ve perişan bir halde*).⁵³⁶ Mayor Adil Bey was discharged when the Ministry proved he had been secretly selling sacks of rice, designated for the starving deportees, to the population of Silvan for usurious prices.⁵³⁷

At the end of 1917 the culture of embezzlement and moral bankruptcy, combined with economic exhaustion triggered a national famine that struck the deportees in particular. Locally, prices for bread, meat, sugar, salt, rice, wheat, fat, tea, and coffee quintupled. Even local products

⁵²⁹ Yaşar Kemal, *Yaşar Kemal Kendini Anlatıyor: Alain Bosquet ile Görüşmeler* (İstanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 1999), p.22. For an other account of refugee-deportees see: Yıldırım Sezen (ed.), *İki Kardeşten Seferberlik Anıları* (Ankara: Kültür Bakanlığı Yayınları, 1999).

⁵³⁰ Cigerxwîn, *Jînenîgariya min* (Spånga, Sweden: APEC, 1995), pp.55-57.

⁵³¹ Hans-Lukas Kieser, “Zwischen Ararat und Euphrat: abendländische Missionen im späotosmanischen Kurdistan,” in: Hans-Lukas Kieser (ed.), *Kurdistan und Europa: Einblicke in die kurdische Geschichte des 19. und 20. Jahrhunderts* (Zürich: Chronos, 1997), p.137.

⁵³² Refik Halit (Karay), “Harb Zengini,” in: *Yeni Mecmua*, vol.2-42 (2 May 1918), pp.301-2.

⁵³³ BOA, DH.ŞFR 70/149, İAMM to Diyarbekir, 30 November 1916.

⁵³⁴ BOA, DH.ŞFR 70/237, Directorate for Employment to Diyarbekir, 12 December 1916.

⁵³⁵ BOA, DH.ŞFR 69/191, AMMU to Diyarbekir, 5 November 1916.

⁵³⁶ BOA, DH.ŞFR 71/53, AMMU to Diyarbekir, 21 December 1916.

of which there had been a surplus for ages, such as Diyarbekir rice and watermelons, became very scarce.⁵³⁸ Although the AMMU ordered deportation officials to be cautious of shortages,⁵³⁹ only in exceptional situations were the deportations cancelled or postponed. For example, only when an entire convoy from Beşiri became ill was their deportation postponed.⁵⁴⁰ Nevertheless, because Talât insisted on deportation, the AMMU was often unable to provide even a minimal amount of food for the deportees. In Urfa, many Kurdish children died of starvation due to too late arrival of the designated amount of flour.⁵⁴¹ In Sivas too, due to negligence “hundreds of children were wandering around hungry and wretched” (*yüzlerce çocuğun aç ve perişan dolaştıkları*).⁵⁴² When there was no food at all, deportees ate doves, street cats and dogs, hedgehogs, frogs, moles, snakes, and organs of slaughtered animals.⁵⁴³ In some extreme cases the deportees saw no other option than to eat their own relatives who had died on the road.⁵⁴⁴ Starvation was but one side of the problem, adequate shelter was another. When an Arab and Kurdish convoy was deported from Diyarbekir westward, nearly the entire convoy froze to death in the desert night. The few remaining survivors were distributed among the local villages.⁵⁴⁵ Finally, a socially sensitive problem was the moral collapse of Kurdish communities, deported away. An Ottoman army officer noted that out of dire helplessness, Kurdish women saw no other option than “selling their bodies”.⁵⁴⁶ The Kurdish politician Memduh Selim Bey lamented after the war that many lonesome Kurdish women resorted to “alcoholism” (*müzkirat*) and had no choice but to engage in “prostitution” (*fuhşiyat*).⁵⁴⁷ As in the Armenian case,⁵⁴⁸ in Kurdish culture prostitution was unheard of until the ravages of the First World War.⁵⁴⁹

The deportees often feared that they would be integrally killed like the Armenians. According to popular beliefs, the CUP elite had ostensibly agreed upon first destroying the “zo” (the Armenians), whereupon they proceeded to annihilate the “lo” (the Kurds).⁵⁵⁰ These fears were most acute in the maverick Dersim district, the south of which had actively opposed the

⁵³⁷ BOA, DH.ŞFR 87/345, Ministry of War (General Directorate for Supplies) to Diyarbekir, 30 May 1918.

⁵³⁸ Ahmad, *Kurdistan* [n.168], pp.131-32.

⁵³⁹ BOA, DH.ŞFR 74/258, AMMU to Diyarbekir, 26 March 1917.

⁵⁴⁰ BOA, DH.ŞFR 68/91, Talât to Diyarbekir, 23 September 1916.

⁵⁴¹ BOA, DH.ŞFR 78/237, AMMU to Urfa, 30 July 1917.

⁵⁴² BOA, DH.ŞFR 78/242, AMMU to Sivas, 30 July 1917.

⁵⁴³ Hasan Hışyar Serdi, *Görüş ve Anılarım 1907-1985* (İstanbul: Med, 1994), p.139.

⁵⁴⁴ Mehmed E. Zeki, *Kürdistan Tarihi* (İstanbul: Komal, 1977), p.168. This book was originally published in Arabic in Cairo in 1936 by an ethnically Kurdish officer who had served in the Ottoman army during World War I.

⁵⁴⁵ BOA, DH.ŞFR 82/180, AMMU to Diyarbekir, 25 December 1917.

⁵⁴⁶ Rafiq Hilmi, *Yaddasht* (Tehran: Mohammed-i Saqiz, 1987), pp.30-31.

⁵⁴⁷ Memduh Selimbegî, “Hewar! - İmdad!,” in: *Jin*, 22 May 1919, p.5.

⁵⁴⁸ The war had caused a moral calamity for surviving Armenian women too, many of whom were unable to sustain themselves and therefore ended up in the prostitution business. This even affected children as “there was rampant child prostitution and rape along Turkey’s railroads during this period. Children eight years old and even younger were prostituted in these regions.” Hilmar Kaiser, “Children’s fate during the Armenian genocide,” lecture at Eaton Hall (Glendale, CA), 7 October 2004. Fahriye Yıldırım (Fexo for short) was an Armenian girl from Diyarbekir who was saved from death in the genocide and absorbed into a Kurdish family, where she was continuously denigrated as “Christian slut” (*qahpê fillan*). Because of her extremely low social status, being both an orphan and of Armenian descent, she saw no other option than to prostitute herself from a young age. In the 1950s she became a phenomenon in Diyarbekir when she eventually assumed control of the Diyarbekir brothel. Naci Kutlay, “Acı Gerçekler - 2,” in: *Özgür Politika*, 5 November 2003.

⁵⁴⁹ As the British agent Noel wrote: “In Kurdish there is no word for a prostitute. In the Eastern districts she is euphemistically referred to as a Persian, in the North as a Russian, in the south as an Arab, and in the West as a Turk.” Edward Noel, “The Character of the Kurds as Illustrated by their Proverbs and Popular Sayings,” in: *Bulletin of the School of Oriental Studies*, vol.1 (1917-20), p.85.

⁵⁵⁰ The words ‘zo’ and ‘lo’ are derogatory expressions in Turkish culture, referring to colloquial utterances in the Armenian and Kurdish languages, respectively. Firat Cewerî, *Li Mala Mir Celadet Ali Bedir-xan* (Stockholm: Nûdem, 1998), pp.71-75.

genocide. In July 1915 rumors spread around Dersim that the Ottoman government would destroy the Kurds right after their anti-Armenian campaign. Talât immediately ordered counter-propaganda to be disseminated.⁵⁵¹ When the Dersimites were indeed deported a year later, they sang lamentations, praying to God for survival and accusing the Germans of deporting them.⁵⁵² The rumors spread over to other provinces as well, impelling some deportees to attempt escape from the deportation convoys. Kurdish tribesmen from Mardin and Karacadağ apparently overheard they were to be deported to the interior and tried to seek asylum among the Viranşehir, Beşiri, and Savur tribes. They were tracked down, captured, and deported.⁵⁵³ But even when they were deported to the western provinces, some deportees still managed to escape. In July 1917 tribesmen of the Hasanan tribe were deported from Siverek to Istanbul. Five out of nine deportees escaped from the convoys and were lost without a track.⁵⁵⁴

On arrival the Kurds were seldom provided with sufficient material to make a living. As the German officer Ludwig Schraudenbach wrote, not without sarcasm:

Die Türken verpflanzten damals Tausende von kurdischen Familien aus ihren Bergen nach Adana. Sie sollten dort 'Ackerbau treiben'. Der k.u.k. Oberleutnant Schalzgruber wusste leider zu berichten, dass oben im armenischen Taurus die Strassen gesäumt seien mit solchen verhungerten oder verhungern den Kolonisatoren. Auch am Bahnhof Mamouré kauerte eine Schar von ihnen, die robusten Körper in Lumpen gehüllt, Säcke voll Pelze und Teppiche schleppend, Kochtöpfe auf die verlausten Köpfe gestülpt. Wird bei Adana wirklich etwas zu ihrem Empfang organisiert sein? Wird ihnen Land, Vieh und Werkzeug gegeben werden? Oder wird man sie elend verkommen lassen?⁵⁵⁵

The third question could be answered affirmatively. The Ottoman directorate for deportation was predominantly interested in whether there were signs of any progress with respect to the assimilation project. When a convoy of Kurds arrived in Konya, the directorate ordered them settled and a report prepared including information on their native region, language, profession, and numbers.⁵⁵⁶ Although no systematic longitudinal research has been conducted on the fate of the Kurdish deportees, it seems that for most Kurds the deportation project has not produced much result. Well into the 1990s, Kurdish and Zaza communities, e.g. living in the Konya basin, preserved their tribal identities and languages.⁵⁵⁷

The deportations caused many Kurdish children to be orphaned. Many of them had already been half-orphans as their fathers had died in warfare. Their mothers and aunts tried to protect them from disease, hunger, and violence, thereby often sacrificing themselves. The government

⁵⁵¹ BOA, DH.ŞFR 54-A/128, Talât to the provinces of Mamuret-ul Aziz, Erzurum, Diyarbakir, Bitlis, 25 July 1915.

⁵⁵² Apparently, the Dersimites were aware of the fact that the 1916 Dersim deportations were suggested and initiated by Ottoman Chief of Staff General Bronsart von Schellendorf. The deportees lamented: "German, oh German / Why have you issued a decree on us / May your honour be defiled German / You have brought ruin on our men / May your house burn down German / You have uprooted our men." (Alamani Alamani / Te çima mera qenûnek dananî / Ar di mala te kevî Alamani / Te paşiya mêran mera anî / Mala te bişewite Alamani / Te kokê mêran mera anî). Dersimi, *Hatıratım* [n.504], pp.80-81.

⁵⁵³ BOA, DH.ŞFR 69/156, AMMU to Diyarbakir, 1 November 1916.

⁵⁵⁴ BOA, DH.ŞFR 78/142, Talât to Diyarbakir, 16 July 1917.

⁵⁵⁵ Ludwig Schraudenbach, *Muharebe: Der erlebte Roman eines deutschen Führers im Osmanischen Heere 1916/17* (Berlin: Drei Masken Verlag, 1924), p.459.

⁵⁵⁶ BOA, DH.ŞFR 77/45, İAMM to Adana, 6 June 1917.

ordered the establishment of an orphanage in Urfa to lodge orphans of the Haydaran tribe. The construction of an orphanage in Diyarbekir was not possible due to ‘turkification regulations’: no Kurdish deportees, not even orphans, were to remain in that province.⁵⁵⁸ Only the strongest and luckiest orphans survived the deportations. In Palu, orphans were concentrated and needed to be deported. The AMMU knew their deportation would result in their decimation, but it decided to deport them anyway, adding that they were allowed to be nourished from the Elaziz army depots.⁵⁵⁹ The same order was issued for Diyarbekir: the Ministry of War was assigned to provide for widows, orphans, and orphanages.⁵⁶⁰ In Mid-April 1918, when it had already become clear that an Ottoman defeat in the war was only a matter of time, orphans from Harput, Dersim and Palu were still instructed to march barefoot to Maraş and Elbistan.⁵⁶¹

Naturally, the Kurdish deportations too demand at least some quantitative data, although it would require a separate study to calculate meticulously how many were deported. According to the Ministry of Economy the total amount of all refugee-deportees numbered well over a million.⁵⁶² Quantifying the deportations is difficult because many Kurdish tribesmen were deported together with Kurdish refugees from the border provinces Erzurum, Van, and Bitlis. In most accounts, the total number of 700,000 is mentioned,⁵⁶³ though there are no reliable statistics. According to one researcher, roughly half of these 700,000 deportees died.⁵⁶⁴ A concrete example can shed light on the death rate of the deportees. Celadet Ali Bedirxan, a Kurdish intellectual met a group of Kurdish deportees and asked them how many had survived the death marches. The answer he received shocked him: the leader of the group answered that out of 787 people that were deported from the village, 23 had survived.⁵⁶⁵ It is even more difficult to determine precisely how many Diyarbekir Kurds were deported. İAMM/AMMU correspondence surmises some details on the magnitude of the deportations. In October 1916 the amount of refugees that had fled the provinces of Bitlis and Van into Diyarbekir was estimated at 200,000.⁵⁶⁶ On 17 October 1916 the AMMU ordered the deportation of 15,000 Kurdish refugees to Konya.⁵⁶⁷ In November 800 people were deported from Palu to Siverek, an intra-provincial deportation.⁵⁶⁸ On 15 July 1917 40,000 Kurds were ordered deported from Diyarbekir to Konya and Antalya.⁵⁶⁹ Two weeks later, 40,000 refugees from Mardin were sent off to the east, even though they were infected with contagious diseases and there was a shortage of

⁵⁵⁷ “Aksaray Kürtleri” and “Polatlı Kürtleri,” in: *Bîrnebûn*, vol.1 (1997), pp.11-25.

⁵⁵⁸ BOA, DH.ŞFR 69/195, AMMU to Urfa, 5 November 1916.

⁵⁵⁹ BOA, DH.ŞFR 84/169, AMMU to Elaziz, 27 February 1918.

⁵⁶⁰ BOA, DH.ŞFR 85/290, Ministry of War (General Directorate for Supplies) to Diyarbekir, 31 March 1918.

⁵⁶¹ BOA, DH.ŞFR 86/46, AMMU to Third Army Commander, 13 April 1918.

⁵⁶² BOA, DUIT, 14/28-3, Ministry of Economy memorandum (undated).

⁵⁶³ Kutlay, *İtihat Terakki* [n.486], p.272; Soviet Academy of Sciences (ed.), *Yeni ve Yakın Çağda Kürt Siyaset Tarihi* (Istanbul: Pêri, 1998, transl. M. Aras), p.96.

⁵⁶⁴ Arshak Safrastian, *Kurds and Kurdistan* (London: Harvill Press, 1948), pp.76, 81.

⁵⁶⁵ Serdî, *Görüş ve Anılarım* [n.543], p.140.

⁵⁶⁶ Justin McCarthy, “Muslim Refugees in Turkey: The Balkan Wars, World War I, and the Turkish War of Independence,” in: *Isis Press and the Institute of Turkish Studies* (Istanbul: Isis, 1993), p.96.

⁵⁶⁷ BOA, DH.ŞFR 69/35, AMMU to Fourth Army Command, 17 October 1916.

⁵⁶⁸ BOA, DH.ŞFR 70/74, AMMU to Mamuret-ul Aziz, 22 November 1916.

carriages.⁵⁷⁰ In spite of the deportations further to the west, in April 1920, 35,940 refugee-deportees in Diyarbekir still had not been settled.⁵⁷¹ These figures suggest that tens of thousands of Diyarbekir Kurds must have been deported to the western provinces.

3.2 Settlement of Muslims, 1917

Along with deporting Kurds *from* Diyarbekir, the CUP also ordered non-Kurdish Muslims deported *to* that province. This two-track policy would expedite the Turkification process. Most of these settlers were Bosnian Muslims, Bulgarian Turks, and Albanian Muslims that had fled the war and persecutions in the Balkans. An other group of settlers were refugees from Bitlis and Van, the Turkish ones being filtered out for immediate settlement in Diyarbekir. At first the settler-deportees were lodged in the Sincariye seminary, where other poor and miserable Diyarbekirites were temporarily housed as well.⁵⁷² These settlers were to be housed in the empty Syriac and Armenian villages, mostly on the Diyarbekir plain. Some were moved north and settled in Palu, others were settled on the Mardin plain. Beginning in the summer of 1915, the settlement policy continued until the end of the war.

The settlers that were deported to Diyarbekir were Muslims who had sought asylum in the Ottoman Empire after the Balkan wars. Many of them had lived in Istanbul in shabby dwellings, impoverished and traumatized. When the war broke out, the CUP activated its plan for ethnic reorganization and the settlers were incorporated in it. The Albanians were but one group to be deported and settled. In June 1915 the İAMM ordered their “scattered settlement in order for their mothertongue and national traditions to be extinguished quickly”.⁵⁷³ The Albanians were to be settled all over the empire, including Diyarbekir province.⁵⁷⁴ The Bosnian refugees were to be settled in Diyarbekir as well. On 30 June 1915 the İAMM ordered 181 Bosnian families temporarily residing in Konya deported to Diyarbekir and settled in its “empty villages”.⁵⁷⁵ The next day, the deportation and settlement of ethnic Turks from Bulgaria and Greece was ordered from İAMM headquarters.⁵⁷⁶

In the meantime, the genocidal persecution of the Diyarbekir Christians was raging in full force. While the Armenians and Syriacs were being massacred, the Muslim settlers were on their way. However, preparations were needed in Diyarbekir in order to lodge the settlers successfully. On 17 June 1915 the İAMM headquarters reiterated its request for economic and geographic data on the emptied Armenian villages of Diyarbekir. In order to send settlers to the province, the

⁵⁶⁹ BOA, DH.ŞFR 78/128 and 78/129, AMMU to Adana and Diyarbekir, 15 July 1917.

⁵⁷⁰ BOA, DH.ŞFR 78/253, AMMU to Diyarbekir, 31 July 1917.

⁵⁷¹ “Muhacirin,” in: *İleri*, 10 Nisan 1920.

⁵⁷² The Sincariye medrese presently serves as the ‘Museum of Archaeology and Ethnography’ in Diyarbekir city.

⁵⁷³ BOA, DH.ŞFR 54/216, İAMM to Konya, 28 June 1915.

⁵⁷⁴ BOA, DH.ŞFR 54/246, İAMM to Diyarbekir, 6 June 1915.

⁵⁷⁵ BOA, DH.ŞFR 54/246, İAMM to Konya, 30 June 1915.

⁵⁷⁶ BOA, DH.ŞFR 54/246, İAMM to Diyarbekir, 1 July 1915.

local capacity to absorb immigrants had to be determined.⁵⁷⁷ A week later it ordered educational commodities to be provided for the settlers:

It is necessary to appropriate the schools of the towns and villages that have been emptied of Armenians to Muslim immigrants to be settled there. However, the present value of the buildings, the amount and value of its educational materials needs to be registered and sent to the department of general recordkeeping.⁵⁷⁸

This national order was a warrant for the seizure of all Ottoman-Armenian schools and their conversion into Ottoman-Turkish schools. School benches, blackboards, book cabinets, and even paper and pens were allocated to the yet-to-arrive settlers. The Commission for Abandoned Properties was assigned to carry out this operation in Diyarbekir.⁵⁷⁹

The CUP intended the deportation and settlement of Albanians, Bosnians, and Turks to be a one-way trip into Diyarbekir province. Whether coming in from the west or east, non-Kurdish settlers were expected to turkify the province. Turkish refugees from Bayezid and Diyadin (Ararat region) were selected from mixed convoys and directly settled in Silvan. Their livelihood was financed from the ‘abandoned property budget’.⁵⁸⁰ When non-Kurdish Ottoman refugees arrived in Diyarbekir from Bitlis, they were the only ones who were allowed to be settled in the provincial hinterland. They were Turkophone Ottomans and were earmarked as ‘Turks’ by the CUP. Only in exceptional situations were the refugees to be sent forth to Urfa, Antep, and Maraş.⁵⁸¹ For example, Talât personally took care that Muş deputy İlyas Sami and Genç deputy Mehmed Efendi were settled with their families in Diyarbekir city.⁵⁸² The AMMU systematically set aside the ‘abandoned property’ for these settlers. In September 1916 it ordered “abandoned buildings in Diyarbekir assigned to Turkish refugees coming from Van and Bitlis”.⁵⁸³ The CUP probably considered it very important that the settlers remained in the province considering they reiterated this over and over. On 9 November 1916 the AMMU warned provincial authorities “to prevent by any means that the Turkish settlers in the province be moved to other regions”.⁵⁸⁴ Four days later the order was repeated “with special emphasis”.⁵⁸⁵ Even after the Russian army had imploded and retreated in 1917 and when the Ottoman army swept all the way into Baku, Turkish refugees in Diyarbekir were not allowed to return to their native regions. The order was repeated in March 1918⁵⁸⁶ and in April 1918.⁵⁸⁷ The German official Von Lüttichau saw that

⁵⁷⁷ BOA, DH.ŞFR 54/39, İAMM to Diyarbekir, 17 June 1915.

⁵⁷⁸ BOA, DH.ŞFR 54/101, İAMM to provinces, 22 June 1915.

⁵⁷⁹ BOA, DH.ŞFR 54/331, İAMM to Diyarbekir, 7 July 1915.

⁵⁸⁰ BOA, DH.ŞFR 59/7, İAMM to Diyarbekir, 14 December 1915.

⁵⁸¹ BOA, DH.ŞFR 61/121, İAMM to Diyarbekir, 26 February 1916.

⁵⁸² BOA, DH.ŞFR 61/139, Talât to Diyarbekir, 28 February 1916.

⁵⁸³ BOA, DH.ŞFR 67/174, AMMU to Diyarbekir, 3 September 1916.

⁵⁸⁴ BOA, DH.ŞFR 69/219, AMMU to Diyarbekir, 9 November 1916.

⁵⁸⁵ BOA, DH.ŞFR 69/248, AMMU to Diyarbekir, 13 November 1916.

⁵⁸⁶ BOA, DH.ŞFR 85/262, AMMU to Diyarbekir, 28 March 1918.

⁵⁸⁷ BOA, DH.ŞFR 86/46, AMMU to Third Army Commander, 13 April 1918.

those settlers that secretly attempted to return to their native regions “unterwegs zu Hunderten umkamen, weil sie kein Brot hatten”.⁵⁸⁸

The information on the settlements of the Muslim settlers in the districts and towns of Diyarbekir province is sparse. Little fieldwork has been conducted as to whether the settlers remained in the designated towns and villages, or if they migrated somewhere else. An Armenian survivor recalled how in the late summer of 1915 Turks were settled in Palu. Local officials saw to it that the settlers were given the best houses of the deported Armenians.⁵⁸⁹ According to a native of Palu, in the Republican period Palu town had a Zaza, a Kurdish, and a Turkish neighbourhood. The latter neighbourhood was populated by “immigrants” (*muhacir*), most of them Pomacs from Thrace.⁵⁹⁰ Three weeks after the Qarabash massacre the İAMM ordered “the settlement of the immigrants, the confiscation of movables and pack animals, and the reporting of the population settled in emptied Armenian villages”.⁵⁹¹ Colonel Cemilpaşazade Mustafa took control of Qarabash as Pomacs and Kurds were settled in that village.⁵⁹² In Kabiye, all property of the autochthonous Christians was seized and assigned to the settlers: vineyards, watermelon fields, agricultural implements, and even the carrier pigeons. The few survivors who dared to return to their village were chased out by the Muslim settlers.⁵⁹³ Q’sor village, on the Mardin plain, became a command post for the German army in 1917. The Germans demolished the Syriac Catholic church and built houses with its solid stones, settling Kurdish refugees from the Karahisar region in the village.⁵⁹⁴ The village of Tell Ermen, the Christian population of which had been integrally massacred in July 1915, was repopulated with Circassians and Chechens. Since the settlers already had ploughs and oxes, all they needed for subsistence farming was seed. The Ministry of War was ordered to provide the requisite seeds, distributing 1000 cups of barley and 300 cups of wheat from storage depots to the settlers.⁵⁹⁵ When the Chechen population surpassed Tell Ermen’s capacity, the construction of a new village for the Chechens was ordered in September 1918.⁵⁹⁶

An assessment of the settlement of these communities in Diyarbekir province would produce rather ambivalent results. On the one hand they met with hardship as they had difficulties acclimatizing to the hot Mesopotamian climate, on the other hand they were protected and well-provided for by the Ottoman government, and later by the Turkish Republic. It also seems that their ‘Turkificational efficacy’ was overestimated by the CUP. Ninety years after the deportations, it seems that most of the Bosnian, Albanian, and Turkish settlers in Diyarbekir

⁵⁸⁸ PAAA, R14104, Karl Axenfeld to Embassy, 18 October 1918.

⁵⁸⁹ Kitabdjian (ed.), “Récit de Garabed Farchian” [n.326], p.288.

⁵⁹⁰ Süleyman Yapıcı, *Palu: Tarih-Kültür-İdari ve Sosyal Yapı* (Elazığ: Şark Pazarlama, 2002), pp.208-11.

⁵⁹¹ BOA, DH.ŞFR 53/242, İAMM to Diyarbekir, 5 June 1915.

⁵⁹² Qarabashi, *Dmo Zliho* [n.199], p.85.

⁵⁹³ Jastrow, *Die mesopotamisch-arabischen* [n.255], p.346.

⁵⁹⁴ Ternon, *Mardin 1915* [n.142], p.162.

⁵⁹⁵ BOA, DH.İUM E-26/9, 27 December 1916.

⁵⁹⁶ BOA, DH.ŞFR 91/197, AMMU to Diyarbekir, 22 September 1918.

province kurdified themselves more than that they turkified the Diyarbekir Kurds. Besides the demographic preponderance of the Kurds, ethnic intermarriages and economic ties have undoubtedly contributed to this result.

3.3 The aftermath of the war, 1918

In October 1918 the Ottoman Empire suffered a catastrophic defeat when all of its frontlines disintegrated, triggering a sudden implosion of the army. On 30 October 1918 a truce was signed between Minister of Navy Hüseyin Rauf Orbay and the British Admiral Calthorpe, sanctioning unconditional surrender.⁵⁹⁷ Paralyzed by panic and defeatism, that next night the inner circle of the CUP burnt suitcases full of documents, disbanded the CUP as a political party, and fled on a German submarine to Odessa. The seven escapees were the triumvirate (Enver, Talât, Cemal), the doctors Bahaeddin Şakir and Nâzım, and two others.⁵⁹⁸ The power vacuum was filled by the new Sultan Mehmed the Sixth (Vahdettin), Grand Vizier Damat Ferit Paşa, and the Freedom and Coalition Party, the CUP's sworn enemy. They ruled the Ottoman Empire during the interregnum (1918-1923) as long as the Istanbul government had sufficient actual leverage in Anatolia.⁵⁹⁹

At that time Diyarbekir was severely gripped by famine and local unrest. Talât had prolonged martial law in May 1918,⁶⁰⁰ but in reality chaos ruled the province. Ottoman soldiers who had not been paid in months raided villages, pillaging goods, and engaging in skirmishes with the locals.⁶⁰¹ A German report paraphrased the condition of most eastern cities: "Unendlich viele verhungern. In jeder Stadt des Ostens wiederholten sich die unerträglichen Bilder des Elends auf der Strasse".⁶⁰² War and genocide had destroyed the very economic fabric of Diyarbekir. As Ahmad noted in his monography on Kurdistan during World War I:

One may conclude that the four years of the First World War brought the Kurdish people, including a considerable number of Kurdish landowners and merchants, and their homeland, nothing but destruction, homelessness, disease and devastation. It would not be untrue to assert that no other people of the Near and Middle East suffered so much misery or misfortune as the Armenians, the Assyrians and the Kurds of the war.⁶⁰³

The damage to the economy was of a great scope. The persecution of the Christians had amounted to the destruction of the middle class, eradicating entire professions. A French report stated that "le départ massif des chrétiens dont la plupart étaient des artisans et des commerçants,

⁵⁹⁷ John Keegan, *The First World War* [n.175], p.415; Erik-Jan Zürcher, "The Ottoman Empire and the Armistice of Moudros," in: Hugh Cecil & Peter H. Liddle (eds.), *At the Eleventh Hour: Reflections, Hopes, and Anxieties at the Closing of the Great War, 1918* (London: Leo Cooper, 1998), pp.266-75.

⁵⁹⁸ Aydemir, *Enver Paşa* [n.172], vol.II, p.497.

⁵⁹⁹ Tarkan Zafer Tunaya, *Türkiye'de Siyasal Partiler*, vol.2, *Mütareke Dönemi* (Istanbul: İletişim, 1997), pp.29-61.

⁶⁰⁰ BOA, DH.ŞFR 87/278, Talât to Diyarbekir, 25 May 1918.

⁶⁰¹ BOA, DH.ŞFR 89/38, Talât to the provinces of Elaziz, Diyarbekir, and Erzurum, 7 July 1918.

⁶⁰² PAAA, R14104, Karl Axenfeld to Embassy, 18 October 1918.

⁶⁰³ Ahmad, *Kurdistan* [n.167], p.136.

avait créé une crise économique importante dans la région”.⁶⁰⁴ Before the war, 230 copper smiths produced 65,000 to 70,000 kilos of copper in Diyarbakir province on a yearly basis. “Six hundred masters and workers, all of them Christian, earned their living in this industry, which yielded a net profit of 25 to 30 percent.” After the deportations and massacres only thirty smiths remained in all of the province, and production dropped to five percent of its pre-war volume.⁶⁰⁵ The wine production in the region experienced a dramatic downfall: the Syriac and Armenian winegrowers had been eliminated and failed harvests only contributed to the ruination.⁶⁰⁶ The production of wine by autochthonous Syriacs and Armenians no longer exists.⁶⁰⁷ The same fate befell the popular Diyarbakir shawl (*puşî*), originally woven with red cotton cloth by Armenians and Syriacs, which obviously disappeared with the disappearance of its producers.⁶⁰⁸ Today, traditional shawl production too is an extinct craft.⁶⁰⁹ According to one scholar of the period, these economic ravages were even more far-reaching because they were not limited to one generation: “eighty-six years after the 1915 genocide of the Armenians, lands that were once highly productive lie barren in eastern Turkey”.⁶¹⁰

After 1 November 1918, the flight of the seven CUP leaders caused a massive outburst of bitter invective against the CUP. Public opinion was disenchanted and blamed the CUP for the country’s misery. Although most Ottomans were relieved the war had finally come to an end, the opposition launched a witch-hunt against CUP leaders and loyalists. With censorship lifted, Armenian newspapers published detailed accounts of the massacres, exposing some of the CUP’s most esoteric outrages. When CUP bureaucrats denied the killings, the noted Circassian liberal patriot Hasan Amca published an article titled “Well who killed hundreds of thousands of Armenians then?” Hasan’s article unequivocally condemned the genocidal persecution of the Armenians, shedding light on shocking events the public considered beyond belief.⁶¹¹ Kurdish intellectuals too vented their anger on CUP policies. Kemal Fevzi lamented that Kurdish villages had been reduced to “open, graveless cemeteries” and blamed Talât and his consorts for the

⁶⁰⁴ *Centre des Archives Diplomatiques de Nantes*, Mandat Syrie-Liban, 1er versement, no.1782, Turquie, compte-rendu de renseignements, no.55, 27 December 1924, Beyrouth, exemplaire no.19, “Le retour des chrétiens” (SR Hassatché, d’après un commerçant venu de Diarbakir), quoted in: Vahé Tachjian, *La France en Cilicie et en Haute-Mésopotamie: aux confins de la Turquie, de la Syrie et de l’Irak (1919-1933)* (Paris: Karthala, 2004), p.260.

⁶⁰⁵ Charles Issawi, *The Economic History of Turkey 1800-1914* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1980), p.305. Three weeks before the Ottoman defeat, Talât ordered all remaining craftsmen (some of whom had been exempted from destruction because of their skills) deported to Diyarbakir, where they were concentrated in the inner city: BOA, DH.ŞFR 92/47, Talât to Bitlis and Diyarbakir, 5 October 1918. Therefore, well into the 1940s there were still Christian merchants and craftsmen in Diyarbakir: Seyfi Alpan, “Diyarbakır’ın Ekonomik Hayatına Toplu bir Bakış,” in: *Karacadağ*, vol.2, no.17 (20 June 1939), pp.11-14. The Armenian author Migirdiç Margosyan is a child of one of these few surviving families in Diyarbakir’s Armenian neighbourhood Xançepek. He sketches a very nostalgic picture of his youth in the 1940s, when he used to work in his uncle Khachador’s smithy: Migirdiç Margosyan, *Gâvur Mahallesi* (İstanbul: Aras, 2002), pp.101-15.

⁶⁰⁶ Gustav Bredemann & Jakob Künzler, “Über den Weinbau und die Aufbereitung der Trauben zu Wein und Traubenkonserven in Nordsyrien und Obermesopotamien,” in: *Archiv für Wirtschaftsforschung im Orient*, vol.4, no.1/2 (Berlin, 1919), pp.25-54.

⁶⁰⁷ Other than the state-produced wines in Elazığ (Buzbağ), the only indigenous wine left in the region was the Syriac brand *Circis* in Mardin province. However, the last Syriac winegrower Circis Yüksel was shot dead in Mardin by the Kurdish Workers Party (*Partiya Karkerên Kurdistan*, PKK) on 19 September 1992. *Zur Lage der Christen im Tur Abdin* (Linz: Freunde des Tur Abdin, 1993), p.2.

⁶⁰⁸ Ahmet Taşgün, “Diyarbakır’da Geleneksel Bir Meslek: Puşicilik,” in: *Folklor Edebiyat*, vol.35, no.3 (2003), pp.65-73.

⁶⁰⁹ Interview with Fuat İplikçi (aged 76) from Diyarbakir, conducted in Turkish by Şeyhmus Diken in Diyarbakir (2003), published as: “Fuat İplikçi,” in: Diken, *Diyarbakir* [n.374], pp.263-86.

⁶¹⁰ Roger W. Smith, “Scarcity and Genocide,” in: Michael N. Dobkowski & Isidor Walliman (ed.), *On the Edge of Scarcity: Environment, Resources, Population, Sustainability, and Conflict* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 2002), pp.140-41.

⁶¹¹ Çerkez Hasan, “Peki yüzbinlerce Ermeni’yi kim öldürdü?” in: *Alemdar*, 5 April 1919.

suffering of the Kurdish deportees.⁶¹² The oppositional journalist Refi Cevat wrote: “These men don’t even deserve the gallows. Their heads should be ripped off and paraded around on wood blocks for days as a lesson!”⁶¹³

The CUP defended itself, denying the genocide, claiming that massive Armenian losses had never been official policy. Writing from Berlin where he had fled to, Talât claimed in his memoirs there hadn’t been any systematic massacres and blamed the Armenians for everything that had occurred to them. In an interview he gave to the British agent Aubrey Herbert after the war, Talât tried to absolve himself from blame, trivializing the atrocities and juxtaposing them with Armenian revenge acts.⁶¹⁴ Cemal Paşa wrote an article for the *Frankfurter Zeitung* in an attempt to rehabilitate his reputation. Cemal wrote about the execution of Çerkez Ahmed that he had ordered him arrested and court-martialled, the very moment he had heard they had committed atrocities against the Diyarbakir Armenians and had assassinated Zohrab and Vartkes.⁶¹⁵ Cognizant of the fact that exhibiting knowledge of the killings may have an incriminating effect upon himself, Cemal did not mention that he executed Çerkez Ahmed on direct orders of Talât. Ziyâ Gökalp too, denied the genocidal nature of the crimes committed during wartime and refused calling them a “massacre” (*ketâl*), rather describing them as a “combat” (*mukatele*).⁶¹⁶ It is noteworthy that during the armistice the massacres were only denied by CUP advocates whereas many non-nationalists had a propensity to denounce the crimes.

Conversely, in a personal discussion with CUP party boss Mithat Şükrü Bleda some time before the end of the war, Dr. Mehmed Reşid freely spoke his mind about the killings during his governorship. When Bleda asked Reşid how he, nota bene as a doctor, had had the heart to cause the deaths of so many people, Reşid answered:

Being a doctor could not cause me to forget my nationality! Reşid is a doctor. But he was born as a Turk. [...] Either the Armenians were to eliminate the Turks, or the Turks were to eliminate the Armenians. I did not hesitate a moment when I was confronted with this dilemma. My Turkishness prevailed over my profession. I figured, instead of them wiping us out, we’ll wipe them out. [...] On the question how I, as a doctor, could have murdered, I can answer as follows: the Armenians had become hazardous microbes in the body of this country. Well, isn’t it a doctor’s duty to kill microbes?⁶¹⁷

On Bleda’s question whether he feared ‘historical responsibility’, Reşid had answered: “Let other nations write about me whatever history they want, I couldn’t care less”.⁶¹⁸

In the turbulent period after the Ottoman defeat, the Istanbul press portrayed Dr. Reşid as a monster. Süleyman Nazif emphatically wrote that Dr. Reşid had “destroyed thousands of

⁶¹² Kemal Fevzi, “İssız Köy”, in: *Jin*, 4 June 1919, pp.1-3.

⁶¹³ *Alemdar*, 12 March 1919, quoted in: Sina Akşin, *İstanbul Hükümetleri ve Milli Mücadele* (İstanbul: Cem, 1976), p.199.

⁶¹⁴ Alpay Kabacalı (ed.), *Talât Paşa’nın Anıları* (İstanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 2000), pp.49-79, 159-60.

⁶¹⁵ *Frankfurter Zeitung*, 9 March 1919.

⁶¹⁶ Kocahanoğlu, *İttihat-Terakki* [n.372], p.41.

⁶¹⁷ Salâhattin Güngör, “Bir Canlı Tarih Konuşuyor,” (part 3) in: *Resimli Tarih Mecmuası*, vol.4, no.43 (July 1953), pp.2444-5.

⁶¹⁸ Mithat Şükrü Bleda, *İmparatorluğun Çöküşü* (İstanbul: Remzi, 1979), p.59.

humans from all groups and religions by massacre”.⁶¹⁹ Much to Reşid’s chagrin, this vivid demonization was persuasive to the Ottoman population. In Istanbul, the horrors of Diyarbekir province became known and dreadful details of Reşid’s ‘reign of terror’ became the talk of the town. On 5 November 1918 the ex-governor of Diyarbekir was arrested and after a brief pre-arrest placed in the maximum-security Bekirağa prison, along with other CUP loyalists suspected of having participated in the persecution of the Armenians.⁶²⁰ In an attempt to clear his name, the arrogant and proud Reşid agreed on giving an interview two days later, only to find out that the reporter omitted any allusions and confronted him very directly with the crimes he had committed in Diyarbekir, asking:

‘They say you massacred more than 50,000 women, men, children, innocent people including three mayors, and seized 300,000 pounds worth of gold cash and an equal amount of jewels from them. How exaggerated is all of this?’

– Lies, it’s all lies!

Reportedly you employed a murderer named Major Rüşdü Bey as commander of 30 Circassians he had selected from his clan, to have these helpless people killed.

– I don’t know.

It is said you had the mayor of Lice town Giridi Ahmed Nesimî Bey, a distinguished reporter also famous in the world of literature and publishing, and the vice mayor of Beşiri, Suveydizâde Sabit Bey of the Baghdad elite, graduate of the School of Civil Service, assassinated when they refused to carry out your order for massacre. What is your defense?

– It’s all slander. Aren’t newspapers the source of defamation and anarchy anyway?

After your predecessor ex-governor Hamid Bey left, it is said you had the helpless people of Mardin massacred without distinction of religion and sect. Were those involved in these events your gendarmes?

– I have no knowledge of these things. Excuse me, if it’ll be like this, I’ll walk away! ⁶²¹

In prison, Reşid, vexed by kidney stones, gradually lost touch with reality and became a nervous wreck. His growing isolation reinforced his paranoia of Armenian and English conspiracies. He kept a diary and wrote his memoirs in response to the public disclosures on his governorship in Diyarbekir. Reşid escaped on his way to the bathhouse on 25 January 1919 and went into hiding at a CUP sympathizer. The ensuing odyssey of hiding bolstered his frustration with clandestine life. Underfed, bitter, and desperate, he shot himself in the mouth on the verge of arrest on 6 February 1919.⁶²²

The British government, whose “greatest concern was to punish officials responsible for mistreating British prisoners of war,” insisted on a trial for the dozens of CUP cadres who had been arrested and incarcerated.⁶²³ On 5 February, a day before Reşid’s suicide, the ‘Extraordinary Court-Martial’ was established in the capital Istanbul. The military tribunal set about several series of trials in which the CUP was accused of “deportation and massacre” (تهجير و تقتيل), specifically of

⁶¹⁹ Süleyman Nazif, “Doktor Reşid,” in: *Hadisat*, 8 February 1919.

⁶²⁰ Mehmed Reşid, “Günlük,” in: Bilgi, *Dr. Mehmed Reşid* [n.209], pp.115-37.

⁶²¹ *Hadisat*, 7 November 1918.

⁶²² Feridun Kandenir, “İlk İttihatçılardan Dr. Reşit’in intiharı,” in: *Yakın Tarihimiz*, vol.II (1962), pp.339-41.

⁶²³ James F. Willis, *Prologue to Nuremberg: The Politics and Diplomacy of Punishing War Criminals of the First World War* (London: Greenwood Press, 1982), p. 154.

“robbery of money and goods, burning of houses and corpses, mass murder, rape, persecution and torture”. The court noted that “these were not sporadic incidents but prepared by the forces of a center consisting of the abovementioned persons and whose implementation was ordered through oral and secret orders and instructions,” and that “these militias were employed to murder and destroy the convoys that were subjected to deportation”.⁶²⁴ Despite the hostile milieu, for about a year the court-martial and its inquiry commissions tried to function as best as they could. “It was able to secure, authenticate, and compile an array of documents, including formal and informal orders for massacre, implicating the Ottoman High Command, the Ministers of Interior and Justice, and the top leadership of the İttihad Party”.⁶²⁵ However, due to negligence and obstruction by pro-CUP elements in the bureaucracy the last sitting was held on 9 February 1920 and the juridical proceedings were abrogated.⁶²⁶

The manhunt for blacklisted CUP officials was extended to the provinces too. One of the first massacrers of Diyarbakir to be arrested after Reşid was the Circassian militia leader Çerkez Harun. Harun was arrested in Diyarbakir city but managed to flee on the way to Istanbul, but he was arrested again around Sivas.⁶²⁷ Upon arrival in Diyarbakir on 14 May 1919, the Eighth Inquiry Commission ordered the arrest of the militia commanders, at that time *de facto* in charge of the city. When the police tracked down Yasinzâde Şevki, Halifezâde Salih, and Pirinçizâde Sıdkı in front of the telegraph office, the latter opened fire on the police in broad daylight and fled to the countryside.⁶²⁸ Şevki fled to Qitirbil village.⁶²⁹ Müftüzâde Şeref was besieged in his house but refused to surrender, opening fire on the police that set off a skirmish for four hours. When his father mufti Hacı İbrahim heard of the encounter he rushed to the scene and brokered a deal: the parties agreed that Şeref would lodge a statement at the police station in exchange for his release.⁶³⁰ The mufti of Cizre Ahmed Hilmi, one of the main organizers of the Cizre massacre, was ordered arrested.⁶³¹ However, the influential mufti enjoyed the protection of several powerful Kurdish chieftains of the Cizre region and the government was unable to undertake serious action to arrest him.⁶³² In the end, the pursuit for the war criminals did not produce much result for the government.

When the British government realized too many CUP members were escaping from the Istanbul prison, it decided to deport 150 of the most important ones to Malta in May 1919.⁶³³ The citadel on the island was furnished as a prison for three groups of Ottoman prisoners: group

⁶²⁴ *Takvim-i Vekâyi*, no.3604, enclosure dated 22 July 1919, transliterated in: Kocahanoğlu, *İttihat-Terakki* [n.372], pp.515, 519.

⁶²⁵ Vahakn N. Dadrian, “The Turkish Military Tribunal’s Prosecution of the Authors of the Armenian Genocide: Four Major Court-Martial Series,” in: *Holocaust and Genocide Studies*, vol.11, no.1 (1997), pp.28-59.

⁶²⁶ For a study on the court-martials see: Anette Höss, *Die türkischen Kriegsgerichtverhandlungen 1919-1921* (unpublished dissertation, University of Vienna, 1991).

⁶²⁷ Bilgi, *Dr. Mehmed Reşid* [n.209], p.130, footnote 73.

⁶²⁸ Şevket Beysanoğlu, “Mütareke ve Milli Mücadele Yıllarında Diyarbakır ve Diyarbakırlılar,” in: *Kara-Amid*, vol.15 (1982), p.72.

⁶²⁹ Years later, Şevki died in an accident in that same village he had massacred in 1915. When he tried to descend from his mule his foot got stuck in the stirrup and the animal dragged him away, trampling him to death against the rocks. Kutlay, “Acı Gerçekler” [n.548].

⁶³⁰ Beysanoğlu, *Diyarbakir Tarihi* [n.141], pp.831-32.

⁶³¹ BOA, DH.KMS 50-2/4, Interior Ministry to Diyarbakir, 4 May 1919.

⁶³² PRO, FO 371/4191, 9 April 1919, reproduced in: Mesut (ed.), *İngiliz Belgelerinde Kürdistan* [n.450], p.29.

A for officials accused of having perpetrated massacres, group B for officials accused of having condoned massacres, and group C for officials who were not directly involved in the massacres.⁶³⁴ Among the Malta deportees were some of the key responsables for the atrocities committed in Diyarbekir. Aziz Feyzi, after Reşid the second most important man in wartime Diyarbekir was arrested on 15 January 1919 and deported with Diyarbekir deputy Zülfü Tiğrel, first to Egypt and then to Malta. On arrival at the island Feyzi was placed in group A, where he spent two years.⁶³⁵ According to a cellmate, Feyzi was the most optimistic captive on Malta, predicting: “We will drive our enemies into the sea, clang clang, you’ll see”.⁶³⁶ Ex-mayor of Mardin and Governor of Diyarbekir İbrahim Bedreddin was deported to Malta in February 1919 where he was surprisingly placed in group C. On 6 September 1921, Aziz Feyzi, İbrahim Bedri and 14 other inmates escaped from Malta and fled to Anatolia, where they joined the Kemalist shadow-government, at that time on a meteoric rise to national power.⁶³⁷ The successful escape was a serious loss of face for the British government, for whom the prisoners became a burden. “Believing reconciliation with the Nationalists necessary, the British government in early 1921 dropped much of its policy on war crimes”.⁶³⁸ It exchanged all remaining Malta captives for British prisoners of war, and accepted Mustafa Kemal as the (new) ‘national leader’ of Turkey.

The main political problem in the aftermath of the war was the territorial integrity of the empire. It was not only the CUP that categorically rejected any Greek and Armenian claims on Anatolia. Therefore, the occupation of İzmir by Greek forces on 15 May 1919 was a catalyst for igniting a massive nationalist protest among all echelons of Ottoman society. After a series of meetings, CUP insiders launched Mustafa Kemal Paşa to the Pontus region on 16 May 1919 to organize the national resistance in Anatolia.⁶³⁹ Kemal was already a legendary general when he arrived in the port city of Samsun on 19 May. From there he contacted civil servants, army officers, and Special Organization operatives, most of whom were sympathetic to CUP nationalism, and tried to gain them for the nationalist resistance. Kemal then co-organized two conferences, one in Erzurum (23 July to 7 August) and one in Sivas (4 to 11 September), both of which articulated the nationalist message that the Ottoman Empire was an indivisible country. All form of mandate was rejected.⁶⁴⁰ The local branches of the Kemalist movement were made up of existing networks of the ‘Society for National Defense’, in the east renamed to ‘Society for the Defense of National Rights in the Eastern Provinces’ (*Vilâyet-i Şarkîye Müdafaa-ı Hukuk-u Millîye*

⁶³³ “Deportation of Turkish suspects: Eventual trial by allies,” in: *The Times*, 5 June 1919.

⁶³⁴ PRO, FO 371/4175/163689, document no.2279/R/1315D, De Robeck to Curzon, 6 December 1919.

⁶³⁵ Bilal Şimşir, *Malta Sürgünleri* (İstanbul: Bilgi, 1985), p.218; for an English translation of this book see: Bilal Şimşir, *The deportees of Malta and the Armenian allegations* (Ankara: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2003).

⁶³⁶ Ahmed E. Yalman, *Yakın Tarihte Gördüklerim ve Geçirdiklerim* (İstanbul: Pera, 1971) vol.1 (1888-1922), p.558.

⁶³⁷ PRO, FO 371/6531, document no.382, Geneva, 23 September 1921.

⁶³⁸ Willis, *Prologue to Nuremberg* [n.623], p.161.

⁶³⁹ Erik-Jan Zürcher, *The Unionist Factor: The Role of the Committee of Union and Progress in the Turkish National Movement, 1905-1926* (Leiden: Brill, 1984), pp.106-17.

⁶⁴⁰ Şevket S. Aydemir, *Tek Adam: Mustafa Kemal* (İstanbul: Remzi, 1966), vol.2 (1919-1922), pp.22-23.

Cemiyeti).⁶⁴¹ With the convention of the Kemalist parliament on 23 April 1920, there were two governments now: one in Istanbul, and one in Ankara, each advocating different policies, accusing each other of treason, and ultimately even condemning each other to death. Perhaps the clearest breach between the two power centers occurred when Istanbul agreed on signing the Treaty of Sèvres on 10 August 1920. The treaty provided for an independent Armenia, for an autonomous Kurdistan, and for a Greek presence in eastern Thrace and the Aegean region.⁶⁴² The Anatolian resistance interpreted this as high treason and pledged they would never accept the conditions stipulated under the Sèvres treaty. They declared war on the Greek and Armenian armed forces, and began a campaign to marshal as much support as possible for the movement. The 'War of Liberation' had begun.⁶⁴³

3.4 The Kemalists take control, 1919-1923

Diyarbakir province faced two social and political problems in the interregnum: the revival of the 'Armenian question', and a nascent Kurdish activism. The situation in the provincial capital and in the towns at that time was precarious as many inhabitants were insecure about what the future would hold. The pro-CUP urban elite, having enriched itself with Christian property only 4 years ago, was bearing the burden of a guilty conscience. The militia leaders understood very well they were sought because of their involvement in the organization and implementation of the genocidal persecution of the Christians. They were also cognizant of the utterly criminal nature of their actions, for which their categoric denial and resistance against litigation provides sufficient proof. The outbreak of anti-CUP emotion in the imperial capital and the return of dozens of Armenian survivors to the province amplified existing fears of the possible establishment of an Armenian state in the eastern provinces. This fear in turn exacerbated existing hatred of Christians. For Kurdish nationalism, the conditions were very favourable during the armistice period, and nationalist organizations and newspapers mushroomed. Kurdish nationalism simmered throughout a small but active group of Diyarbakir Kurds. They demanded full independence for a Kurdish state comprised of more or less the same eastern provinces Armenian nationalists aspired to rule. An account of the Armenian and Kurdish questions in Diyarbakir needs to address the local dynamics, as well as the way in which the governments of Istanbul and Ankara perceived the two issues.

The few surviving Armenian, Syriac, and other Christians of Diyarbakir were destitute and traumatized after the 1918 Ottoman capitulation. Their land had been seized, their stores had been demolished, their churches had been sacked, and their children had been kidnapped. Mehmed VI's government in Istanbul, hostile to the CUP, did not persecute the Armenians, and

⁶⁴¹ Yavuz Aslan, *TBMM Hükümeti: Kuruluşu, Evreleri, Yetki ve Sorumluluğu* (Ankara: Yeni Türkiye Yayınları, 2001), p.141.

⁶⁴² *Treaty of Peace with Turkey: signed at Sèvres, August 10, 1920* (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1920).

senators promised to bring justice to the “brutally massacred Armenians, the deported Arabs, the orphans and widows”.⁶⁴⁴ These words were put into practice as the government allowed the Christians to return to their homes and tried its best to remedy the past wrongs. Ahmet İzzet Paşa, ex-commander of the Second Army in Diyarbakir and now Minister of Interior, ordered all local authorities “to deliver Armenian orphans to Armenian community organizations”.⁶⁴⁵ A week later he ordered several national decrees for all land and goods to be restored to their rightful owners in the case they had returned to their homes and demanded their property.⁶⁴⁶ Where organized Armenian life was weak, relief was offered by the *American Committee for Armenian and Syrian Relief*, later dubbed *Near East Relief*.⁶⁴⁷ As in other cities of the country, an orphanage was set up in Diyarbakir, where Armenian and Syriac orphans were cared for.⁶⁴⁸ The government also attempted to help the kidnapped girls and women who were held against their will in Muslim households. An Armenian survivor named Ohannes complained that his wife Populu (who had been converted into ‘Fehmiye’ in the genocide) was being held in the house of Butcher Halil in Nusaybin against her will. Ohannes accused Halil of having massacred his family and kidnapped his wife, thereby demanding his wife to return to him.⁶⁴⁹ An Armenian girl named Lucia Alyanakian had been living in the house of the Mardin notable Hacıgözüzâde, who had either saved her from death or converted her to an additional wife. The Istanbul government found out her mother Zaruhi Tomasian was alive in Diyarbakir and ordered Lucia delivered to her mother.⁶⁵⁰

Anyone in Diyarbakir who had committed crimes against the Christians was embarrassed by the Sultan’s policy. Those who were utterly hostile to the non-Muslims in the province, notably CUP remnants, now declared loyalty to the Kemalist movement because of their mutual interests. The Kemalists, too, needed to consolidate their position in Diyarbakir and the existing CUP infrastructure proved ideologically congruent and pragmatically useful. Colonel Mustafa Bey of the noted Kurdish Cemilpaşazâde dynasty (an important actor in the Special Organization militia his supervisor the late Dr. Reşid had organized in 1915) was a capable manager of the intrigues and differences of opinion in the Diyarbakir elite.⁶⁵¹ On 22 May 1919 he convened the first meeting of the notables in the large salon of the town hall. The men agreed on founding a local nationalist resistance faction named ‘Society for Defense of the Nation’ (*Müdafaa-ı Vatan Cemiyeti*). Among its members were deputy Zülfü’s brother İhsan Hamid (Tigrel), mufti Hacı

⁶⁴³ Zeki Sarıhan, *Kurtuluş Savaşı Günlüğü* (Ankara: Öğretmen Dünyası Yayınları, 1982-1986), 3 volumes.

⁶⁴⁴ For excerpts of Senator Ahmet Rıza’s speech in the Ottoman senate see: Tunaya, *Türkiye’de Siyasal Partiler* [n.64], p.199.

⁶⁴⁵ BOA, DH.ŞFR 95/163, Ahmet İzzet to provinces, 18 January 1919.

⁶⁴⁶ BOA, DH.ŞFR 95/256, Ahmet İzzet to provinces, 26 January 1919; BOA, DH.ŞFR 96/195, Ahmet İzzet to provinces, 15 February 1919; BOA, DH.ŞFR 96/248, Ahmet İzzet to provinces, 20 February 1919.

⁶⁴⁷ Near East Relief, *Annual Report* (New York: Near East Relief Headquarters, 1920). The organization was later renamed *Near East Foundation*, see: <<http://www.neareast.org/>>.

⁶⁴⁸ Robert L. Daniel, *American Philanthropy in the Near East 1820-1960* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 1922), p.169; Interview with Meryem Krikorian (aged ±75) from Satıköy village (Diyarbakir province), conducted in Turkish in Amsterdam on 16 December 2004.

⁶⁴⁹ BOA, DH.EUM.AYŞ 27/10, Governor of Diyarbakir Faik Ali to Interior Ministry, 26 November 1919.

⁶⁵⁰ BOA, DH.ŞFR 92/209, Directorate for General Security to Diyarbakir, 15 June 1919.

⁶⁵¹ Mahmut Goloğlu, *Millî Mücadele Tarihi* (Ankara: Başnur, 1969), vol.2 (*Sivas Kongresi*), p.123.

İbrahim (Uluğ), ex-mayor of Maden Dr. Osman Cevdet (Akkaynak), Hacı Niyazi (Çıkıntaş), Mustafa Âkif (Tütenk), Pirinççizâde Sıdkı (Tarancı), and Cemilpaşazâde Kasım Bey.⁶⁵² Out of protest against the occupation of İzmir and a possible Armenian state in the eastern provinces, the group sent a telegram to the Istanbul government, containing the following denunciation to Grand Vizier Damat Ferit Paşa: “The eastern provinces are no inherited property from your Albanian father for you to render to the Armenians”.⁶⁵³ The Diyarbakir Society had now taken a stance and had openly flirted with the Kemalists.

It did not take long for an answer to dawn on the Kemalist shadow government. On 1 June 1919 Mustafa Kemal asked the governor of Diyarbakir, Faik Ali Bey, whether a local branch of the *Society for the Defense of National Rights in the Eastern Provinces* had been founded. Vice Governor Mustafa Nadir replied that no other party than the Freedom and Coalition Party existed in Diyarbakir.⁶⁵⁴ The Diyarbakir elite now knew enough: they unilaterally had their own organization merge with the Kemalist mainstream and renamed it *Society for the Defense of National Rights in the Eastern Provinces*, appointing militia major Yasinzâde Şevki leader of the Society. The Diyarbakir elite was now allowed to send deputies to the Kemalist power center, which willingly accepted the allegiance. The Society elected mufti Hacı İbrahim (Uluğ), Nâzım (Önen), Bekir Sıdkı (Ocak), and Circiszâde Abdülgani (Göksu).⁶⁵⁵ This political dichotomy between Istanbul and Ankara caused confusion among local officials. Vice Governor Mustafa Nadir, confronted with two governments giving contradictory orders, on 21 June forwarded Mustafa Kemal’s orders to the Istanbul government and requested instructions on what to do. Istanbul answered: “Mustafa Kemal Paşa has been discharged from office and his movement is illegal. His orders need to be rejected. Immediately report the purpose of the Erzurum congress”.⁶⁵⁶ However, it was too late for words of reproach since the symbiosis between the Kemalist resistance and the residual CUP elite of Diyarbakir was realized.

Ankara needed the Diyarbakir elite to implement its policy on the Armenians, which was marked by the equation of Armenian claims on Anatolia with ‘western imperialism’. As Mustafa Kemal explained in response to a question on the Armenians: “We cannot prohibit individuals to enter the country. Apart from the Armenians, the Chaldeans and Assyrians want this land too. If we have to provide all of them a homeland there won’t be any left for us. That’s how much land they are demanding”.⁶⁵⁷ In response to Istanbul’s policy, the Ankara government launched a new

⁶⁵² Mustafa Â. Tütenk, “1919 Mayıs’ında Diyarbakır’da kurulan Millî Cemiyet ve Toplantıları,” in: *Kara-Amid*, vol.2 (1957), p.327; *Atatürk’ün Söylev ve Demeçleri* (İstanbul: Türk İnkılâp Tarihi Enstitüsü Yayınları, 1945), vol.I, p.9.

⁶⁵³ Diyarbakir Society for the Defense of National Rights in the Eastern Provinces to Interior Ministry, 22 May 1919, reproduced in: Mustafa Â. Tütenk, “Mütarekeden Sonra,” in: *Kara-Amid*, vol.2 (1957), p.325-30.

⁶⁵⁴ Mustafa Kemal to Diyarbakir, 1 June 1919, and Mustafa Nadir to Mustafa Kemal, 8 June 1919, both reproduced in: Mustafa Kemal (Atatürk), *Nutuk* (İstanbul: Millî Eğitim Basımevi, 1973), vol.3 (*Vesikalar*), appended documents no.3 and 8.

⁶⁵⁵ Goloğlu, *Millî Mücadele* [n.651], pp.235-36.

⁶⁵⁶ Mustafa Nadir to Interior Ministry, 21 June 1919, Interior Ministry to Diyarbakir province, 9 July 1919, and Governor Faik Ali to Interior Ministry, 12 July 1919, all reproduced in: Yunus Nadi, *Kurtuluş Savaşı Anıları* (İstanbul: Çağdaş Yayınları, 1978), pp.95, 107-8.

⁶⁵⁷ Mustafa Kemal, *Eskişehir-İzmit Konuşmaları* (1923) (İstanbul: Kaynak, 1993), p.114.

turkification campaign and gradually expelled genocide survivors and returnees southward.⁶⁵⁸ Since efforts to prosecute the Diyarbekir elite had failed, men like Müftüzâde Şeref and (after his escape) Aziz Feyzi regained local power and were employed for this purpose. The campaign began producing results in 1923 and culminated in the expulsion of thousands of Syrians and Armenians in the summer of the following year.⁶⁵⁹ After this final blow, the number of Armenian families still living in the city could be counted on the fingers of one hand. Anything Armenian had largely been wiped off the political and social map of Diyarbekir province.

The second problem the Kemalists faced was the much more serious threat of Kurdish nationalism. In essence, Kurdish politics in the interregnum was marked by competition between the Kemalists and the British for the loyalties of local Kurdish elites. British intelligence officers had noticed that this had led to the creation of two Kurdish nationalisms in Diyarbekir province: one 'genuine' nationalist movement advocating an autonomous Kurdish state under British protection, and an other, anti-Christian group allied to the CUP and more and more to Mustafa Kemal.⁶⁶⁰ Whereas the first group was made up of Kurdish tribesmen, some clergy, and European-educated Kurdish intellectuals, the second group comprised "Turko-Kurds [who are] convinced that if they shout loud enough, President Wilson will hear and allow them to mismanage Diarbekir by themselves".⁶⁶¹ A low-intensity struggle between these two factions had been raging during the war, but with the capitulations the conflict came to the surface. The parties understood their services were needed and did their utmost to secure their interests by bargaining with the Istanbul government, the British, and the Kemalists. Besides this dichotomy, the Kurdish question was strategically connected to the Armenian question and therefore it was in the interest of both the CUP and the Kemalists to use the Kurds as a buffer against a possible Armenia, and vice versa, for Armenian nationalists to use the Kurds as a buffer against Ottoman territorial claims on their national project.⁶⁶²

The Kurdish nationalist movement in the armistice period was headed by the 'Society for the Advancement of Kurdistan' (*Kürdistan Teâli Cemiyeti*, KTC), a nationalist committee founded in Istanbul on 17 December 1918.⁶⁶³ One of its most active members was Ekrem Cemil (1891-1974) of the Kurdish Cemilpaşazâde dynasty, who co-founded the Diyarbekir branch of the KTC. The Cemilpaşazâde were torn between pro-Kurdish and pro-Turkish politics, as his own

⁶⁵⁸ T.H. Greenshields, *The Settlement of Armenian Refugees in Syria and Lebanon, 1915-1939* (unpublished dissertation, University of Durham, 1978).

⁶⁵⁹ Tachjian, *La France en Cilicie* [n.604], pp.254-58.

⁶⁶⁰ PRO, FO 371/4192, document no. 106843, 24 July 1919, reproduced in: Mesut (ed.), *İngiliz Belgelerinde Kürdistan* [n.450], p.66.

⁶⁶¹ Noel, *Diary of Major E. Noel* [n.282], part 2, p.6.

⁶⁶² According to one source, the Istanbul government had not only allowed but actively stimulated the establishment of a Kurdish nationalist club to counter Armenian-nationalist claims on Eastern Anatolia. Ergün Aybars, *İstiklal Mahkemeleri: Yakın Tarihimizin Gerçekleri* (İstanbul: Milliyet, 1997), pp.308-9. The Kemalist government delegated the task of quelling Kurdish nationalism to General Kâzım Karabekir. After brief inspections Karabekir noted that "the [Kurdish] question can be handled easily by threatening that Kurdistan could become Armenia". Kâzım Karabekir, *Kürt Meselesi* (İstanbul: Emre, 2000), p.172. Kurdish nationalists were not reluctant to oppose Armenian claims either. Nuri Dersimi even went as far as to depict KTC chairman Abdulkadir as a Turkish agent who allegedly exploited Kurdish nationalism as an anti-Armenian instrument for his own ends; Dersimi, *Hatıratım* [n.504], p.104. Whether this was exaggerated or not, the fact remained that in the interregnum it was in the common interest of both the Istanbul government, the Ankara government, and Kurdish nationalists to preclude the establishment of an independent Armenia in the eastern provinces.

uncle Colonel Mustafa Bey was at that time active in the pro-Kemalist resistance in Diyarbakir city. Ekrem began disseminating propaganda among the Kurdish tribal leaders in the province, founded a local branch of the KTC and began visiting chieftains to convince them of the need to rebel against the state in favour of an independent Kurdistan.⁶⁶⁴ The British government supported an autonomous Kurdistan under British mandate and sent Major Edward Noel to collect intelligence on the feasibility of a Kurdish state. Noel met Ekrem in June 1920 in Diyarbakir and together they toured the region, Ekrem showing Noel around in the hope the latter would foster sympathy for the Kurdish national cause.⁶⁶⁵ The police department in Kharput was disturbed by Ekrem's activities in Diyarbakir and wired a telegram to the Diyarbakir police, urging them to incarcerate Ekrem and take precautions against the KTC. Besides closing the local branch of the KTC in Diyarbakir, all documents were to be confiscated.⁶⁶⁶

On the international level, Kurdish nationalism was underrepresented in comparison to the Armenians. The Ottoman army officer Şerif Paşa (1865-1951) took on the task of representing the Kurds on the international arena of nations. He signed a pact with the Armenian nationalist Boghos Nubar (1851-1930) which was in essence an anti-Turkish agreement and an attempt to create a joint Kurdo-Armenian lobby.⁶⁶⁷ Whereas Boghos Nubar headed the Armenian national delegation, Şerif Paşa had declared himself president of a future Kurdistan on 29 July 1919.⁶⁶⁸ Şerif had published a memorandum for the national independence of Kurdistan, presenting it at the Treaty of Versailles.⁶⁶⁹ On 31 August 1919, the KTC in Istanbul wrote a letter to the British government. Their chairman pleaded for the Wilson principles to be applied to the Kurdish nation and formulated two concrete demands. First, the Kurdish deportees “who have been victims of famine, destruction, and Turkish assimilation”, needed to be delivered to their native regions. Second, the chairman urged the British government to put pressure on the Ottoman authorities to lift sanctions on Kurdish societies and political parties.⁶⁷⁰

All of this nationalist liveliness needed to develop into serious action in order for the claims to be taken seriously by adversaries and the great powers. A year before the KTC launched its nationalist campaign, Alikê Battê of the Hevêrkan tribe rebelled against the government. On 11 May 1919 he opened hostilities with a surprise attack on a group gendarmes, but he was isolated in a barn in Medah village. On 18 August 1919 the (in)famous chieftain died of a mortal wound incurred in the battle, and his body was hung in the Midyat square to serve as a deterrent.⁶⁷¹ The

⁶⁶³ İsmail Gölbaş, *Kürdistan Teâlî Cemiyeti* (İstanbul: Doz, 1991), p.12.

⁶⁶⁴ Ekrem Cemil Paşa, *Muhtasar Hayatım* (Brussels: Kurdish Institute, 1991), pp.46-47.

⁶⁶⁵ Noel, *Diary of Major E. Noel* [n.282], part 3, p.2.

⁶⁶⁶ BOA, DH.EUM.AYŞ 11/24, Elaziz Police Department to Diyarbakir Police Department, 2 June 1919.

⁶⁶⁷ Rohat Alakom, *Şerif Paşa: Bir Kürt Diplomatinin Fırtınalı Yılları* (İstanbul: Avesta, 1998), p.98.

⁶⁶⁸ PRO, FO 371/4192, document no. 126007, 6 September 1919, reproduced in: Mesut (ed.), *İngiliz Belgelerinde Kürdistan* [n.450], p.87.

⁶⁶⁹ Chérif Pacha, *Revendications de la Nation kurde* (Paris: Imprimerie A.-G. L'Hoir, 1919).

⁶⁷⁰ KTC Chairman Memduh Selim Bekir to British High Commissioner, 31 August 1919, in: PRO, FO 371/4192, document no. E135258, reproduced in: Mesut (ed.), *İngiliz Belgelerinde Kürdistan* [n.450], pp.95-97.

⁶⁷¹ Kenan Esengin, *Millî Mücadele'de Hıyanet Yarışı* (Ankara: Ulusal, 1969), pp.40-45.

next day the governor of Diyarbekir reported his death to the Istanbul government.⁶⁷² In May 1920, Cemil Çeto, brother of the equally notorious brigand Bişarê Çeto and chieftain of the Pencînarî tribe, rebelled against the Ottoman government. However, conform the usual mechanisms in Kurdish tribal life, their rivals, the Reşkotan tribe, opposed Cemil's forces and the rebellion was quashed in its incipient phase. Cemil surrendered with his four sons on 7 June 1920.⁶⁷³ In that same month, the large Millî tribe in the west of the province rebelled when the French army attempted to regain the city of Urfa in the southwest. Their chieftain Mahmud was not really a Kurdish nationalist but had established contact with Major Noel, who considered him an eligible candidate as Kurdish national representative.⁶⁷⁴ Mahmud wanted to profit from the opportunity and gain local control and power for his tribe. The Millî attacked with 3,000 mounted tribesmen and shortly captured Viranşehir, but the rebellion was subdued and Mahmud's men were repelled into the Syrian desert.⁶⁷⁵ In the end, the Kurdish rebellions did not produce much results due to little perseverance, tribal interests and cleavages, and superior counterforce.

For the Kemalist movement, Kurdish nationalism was a strategic liability and needed to be quelled. Due to their organic links with the CUP, the Kemalists inherited their suspicion of Kurdish politics from their predecessors, the CUP. Psychological warfare and disinformation campaigns were one side of this policy, and cajolery and recruiting of loyal chieftains the other. After the CUP elite fled on a German submarine, the pro-CUP Ottoman parliament issued a decree for the establishment of a committee, relegated to "write brochures to prove the historical existence of Turks and immigrants in Syria, Iraq, Aleppo,⁶⁷⁶ and Eastern Thrace, and to collect information on the Kurdish element".⁶⁷⁷ Turkish nationalists such as Dr. Rıza Nur (1879-1942) and Ziyâ Gökalp (1876-1924) had already proposed to squelch any sign of dissent and solve the Kurdish question through assimilation and deportation. During the interregnum, Dr. Rıza Nur was Minister of Health and Social Welfare in the Kemalist government. He wrote in his memoirs:

The Kurdish question troubles me. There's nothing going on yet but one day they will rise for the national cause. They need to be assimilated. I commenced my research. I requested books on assimilation methods. I located books on Kurds. I sent money to Ziya Gökalp in Diyarbekir and had him research the geographic, linguistic, ethnic, social situation of the Kurds. He sent a report. It was my intention to solve the problem at its roots before it became a Macedonia.⁶⁷⁸

⁶⁷² BOA, DH.EUM.AYŞ 19/6, 19 August 1919, Governor of Diyarbekir to Interior Ministry.

⁶⁷³ Kevirbirî, *Filitê Qûto* [n.134], p.18.

⁶⁷⁴ Noel, *Diary of Major E. Noel* [n.282], part 2, p.4.

⁶⁷⁵ Ali E. Toksoy, *Millî Mücadelede Mardin* (İstanbul: Resimli Ay Matbaası, 1939), pp.45-47.

⁶⁷⁶ Although Mosul has gotten attention from Turkish authors, the case of Aleppo is touched upon by the eccentric Ottoman author Kadir Mısıroğlu. Mısıroğlu was disenchanted when the Treaty of Lausanne assigned Aleppo to the Arabs, claiming that Turkish culture was the dominant culture in Aleppo since time immemorial. Kadir Mısıroğlu, *Lozan zafer mi hezimet mi?* (İstanbul: Sebil, 1971), vol.2, pp.405-24.

⁶⁷⁷ BOA, MV 213/30, 26 November 1918.

⁶⁷⁸ Rıza Nur, *Hayatım ve Hatıratım* (İstanbul: n.p., 1968), vol.3, p.906.

Gökalp's report on the Diyarbekir Kurds was titled "Sociological Research on the Diyarbekir Tribes," numbered 99 pages, and was partially published in his own journal *Küçük Mecmua*. In this report Gökalp used historical events as evidence for his claim that "as a result of thousand years of common religion, history, and geography Turks and Kurds have united both materially and spiritually".⁶⁷⁹ Gökalp further sought to prove that Kurdish was not a language in itself but a dialect of Turkish, which lead him to conclude that the population of Diyarbekir were Turkish.⁶⁸⁰ However, because it was a glaring fact that most people in Diyarbekir spoke Kurdish, according to Gökalp they needed to be forcefully assimilated: "When two nations sharing religion live side by side, one of them will assimilate the other. This is called assimilation (*dénationalisation*). Assimilation appears when a nation eliminates an other nation's language and replaces it by its own language".⁶⁸¹ Gökalp's theories served as a stepping stone for Kemalist policy toward the Kurds. It is also important to note that again, Diyarbekir was singled out for Turkification: in no other province there was a specific attack on the Kurdishness of the region.

In order for these theories to be successful, they needed to be translated into action. The Kemalists quickly took measures to counter Kurdish nationalism, masking their real intentions and secret agenda. Right after his emission to Samsun, Mustafa Kemal wrote in a telegram to the Diyarbekir notables:

I cannot endorse the theory of Kurds breaking away from the state and forming a Kurdistan under auspices of the English. Because this theory is undoubtedly concocted by the English for the benefit of Armenia. [...] I am a staunch supporter of giving all necessary rights and concessions to ensure that our Kurdish brothers have all resources for their freedom, welfare, and advancement.⁶⁸²

British intelligence was aware of this and reported to London that "despite their aversion against the Turks, the establishment of an independent Armenia will drive the Kurds into the arms of the CUP".⁶⁸³ Indeed, at least in Diyarbekir the local Kurds did not seem to be a threat to neither the Ottoman state nor the Kemalist entity. On 14 October 1919 the Diyarbekir notables wired a joint declaration to the Interior Ministry, pledging that the Kurdish nation had been loyal to the Ottoman sultanate and caliphate for centuries, and rejecting separatism.⁶⁸⁴ However, Kurdish nationalists like Ekrem Cemil were carefully observed in the city, and in January 1920 the local CUP elite had ordered the Diyarbekir police department to prepare a report on Kurdish and Armenian nationalist activity in the province. The police department sent the report to the

⁶⁷⁹ Ziyâ Gökalp, "Türkler'le Kürtler," in: *Küçük Mecmua*, vol.1 (5 June 1922), p.11.

⁶⁸⁰ Ziyâ Gökalp, "Millet Nedir?," in: *Küçük Mecmua*, vol.28 (25 December 1922), pp.1-6.

⁶⁸¹ In this article Gökalp refers to the French nation-building process, using the example of the incorporation and assimilation of the Gauls and the Gallic language to demonstrate that similar action needed to be taken against the Kurds and Kurdish. His use of the French term *dénationalisation* is derived from this analogy. Ziyâ Gökalp, "İstimplâl," in: *Küçük Mecmua*, vol.29 (1 January 1923), pp.1-6.

⁶⁸² *Atatürk'ün Bütün Eserleri* (İstanbul: Kaynak, 1999), vol.2 (1915-1919), p.388.

⁶⁸³ Major French to Headquarters, 3 October 1919, reproduced in: Mesut (ed.), *İngiliz Belgelerinde Kürdistan* [n.450], p.99.

⁶⁸⁴ BOA, DH.EUM.AYŞ 27/136, Diyarbekir clergy, middle class, and municipality to Interior Ministry, 14 October 1919.

Interior Ministry and listed the names of Kurds involved in separatist nationalism.⁶⁸⁵ Two months later the Diyarbekir elite reasserted that “the population of Diyarbekir province will live and die for the Islamic caliphate and Ottoman sultanate until eternity”.⁶⁸⁶ A similar telegram was issued from Midyat, where a group of pro-CUP notables vehemently protested against Şerif Paşa acting as a Kurdish representative and collaborating with Armenian nationalists. Like the Diyarbekir elite, the Midyat notables declared their unconditional loyalty to the government and the sultanate.⁶⁸⁷

It seemed that Kurdish nationalism was too weak in Diyarbekir to pose a serious threat to the Ankara government. Nevertheless, the Kemalists were not satisfied and did not want to take any risks or take Kurdish loyalty for granted. Mustafa Kemal contacted several chieftains from the Silvan and Hazro regions and praised them for their patriotism, promising them profit and glory in exchange for loyalty. Men involved in the genocidal persecution of the Christians such as the Kurdish chieftain Sadık Bey were particularly interested in further collaboration with the authorities and agreed on supporting the Kemalists.⁶⁸⁸ The threat of Kurdish nationalism now no longer needed to be considered with diplomacy. Therefore, Mustafa Kemal ordered Ekrem Cemil arrested and incarcerated in Ankara, where he stayed until late 1922, when the Kemalists emerged victorious.⁶⁸⁹ The power the CUP elite and the Kemalists exerted over Diyarbekir province was now total. This situation simmered for a couple of years until Kurdish discontent with Kemalist policy boiled over and caused a rebellion in 1925.⁶⁹⁰

The Ottoman interregnum was marked by the power struggle between Istanbul and Ankara and the threat of independent Armenian and Kurdish states. The CUP continued its mission to create a homogeneous state and transmuted into the Kemalist movement. This meant that the ‘War of Liberation’ was in fact the climax of a decade of intensive Turkification by successive CUP governments. As has been noted, already in 1914 there were plans to continue fighting in case of a defeat, and in 1917 Talât had literally called the war “a war of independence and liberation”. A breakthrough in this deadlock was reached when the Kemalists ‘gained the right’ to form a nation state: on the one hand they skillfully monopolized all means of violence, on the other hand they were accepted by the western-led system of nation states by virtue of their outward national presentation. Even though all the CUP wanted was to retain what was left of the Ottoman Empire, it had homogenized the country in the time span of a single decade and laid the foundations of a unitary nation state, the Turkish Republic. Neither the Armenian, nor the Syriac,

⁶⁸⁵ BOA, DH.EUM.AYŞ 29/104, Diyarbekir police department to Interior Ministry, 7 January 1920.

⁶⁸⁶ *Meclis-i Ayan Zabıt Ceridesi*, 15th meeting, 1 March 1920, vol.I, p.176.

⁶⁸⁷ BOA, DH.EUM.AYŞ 33/74, Midyat notables to Interior Ministry, 1 March 1920.

⁶⁸⁸ For two telegrams sent by Mustafa Kemal to Kurdish chieftains in Diyarbekir see: Beysanoğlu, “Mütareke” [n.628], pp.79-80.

⁶⁸⁹ Cemil, *Muhtasar* [n.663], pp.57-58.

⁶⁹⁰ Hamit Bozarslan, “Kurdish Nationalism in Turkey: From Tacit Contract to Rebellion (1919-1925),” in: Abbas Vali (ed.), *Essays on the Origins of Kurdish Nationalism* (Costa Mesa, CA: Mazda Publishers, 2003), pp.163-90.

nor the Kurdish question was considered a priority and thus, not touched upon any longer. For Diyarbekir province it meant that for the time being, the province had been successfully turkified.

Conclusion

This thesis has addressed Ottoman state policy in Diyarbekir province during the dictatorial rule of the Committee for Union and Progress. From 1913 on, the CUP carried out several campaigns of ethnic cleansing and genocidal persecution, the human cost of which ran in the hundreds of thousands. The internal campaigns ran parallel to the external war effort with the Great Powers, especially on the eastern front against Russia. It was no coincidence that most of the direct killing of non-combatant Ottoman Christians occurred in the eastern provinces, where the threat of a Russian invasion backed by 'Armenian insiders' was most immediate in the paranoid minds of the CUP dictators. However, the deportations and persecutions were mostly autonomous processes and only partly linked to the ebb and flow of the war. The initiation and conduct of the persecutions were generally in the hands of Interior Ministry civil bureaucrats, not military personnel of the Ministry of War. The Ottoman province Diyarbekir has served as a platform for exemplifying these policies at the local level. For a compact overview of the essentials of this thesis, a brief recapitulation of its main arguments is in order.

The two dominant paradigms in the historiography of the late Ottoman Empire can be characterized as a nationalist paradigm and a statist paradigm. According to the first paradigm, the phenomenon of nationalism led to the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire.⁶⁹¹ Centrifugal nationalism nibbled at the imperial system for several decades until the empire crumbled into nation states. Due to their relatively early acquaintance with nationalism, the main force behind this nationalist disintegration was often located among minority groups such as Ottoman Serbs, Albanians, Greeks, and Armenians.⁶⁹² As a result of minority separatism in the Balkans and North Africa, the Empire became more and more turkified in the 19th century.⁶⁹³ In this interpretation, the CUP too, was a nationalist movement that from the 1900s reacted to the minority nationalisms by pushing for the establishment of a stronger Ottoman state. In practice this meant homogenizing the country by force: eliminating and assimilating discordant minorities. In 1923 it succeeded when a unitary Turkish nation state rose from the ashes of the Ottoman Empire.⁶⁹⁴ Hence, the persecutions were a self-fulfilling prophecy, induced by the CUP. This interpretation is often backed by comparative considerations by juxtaposing CUP policy with the Tsarist wartime policy of nationalization and deportation.⁶⁹⁵ In this campaign the Russian

⁶⁹¹ Kemal Karpat, *An inquiry into the social foundations of nationalism in the Ottoman state: From social estates to classes, from millets to nations* (Princeton, NJ: Center of International Studies, 1973); William W. Haddad & William L. Ochsenwald (eds.), *Nationalism in a non-national state: The dissolution of the Ottoman Empire* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1977); Aviel Roshwald, *Ethnic Nationalism and the Fall of Empires: Central Europe, Russia, and the Middle East, 1914-1923* (New York: Routledge, 2001).

⁶⁹² This has often led to moral accusations: Salâhi R. Sonyel, *Minorities and the destruction of the Ottoman Empire* (Ankara: Turkish Historical Society Printing House, 1993).

⁶⁹³ Selim Deringil, *The well-protected domains: ideology and the legitimation of power in the Ottoman Empire, 1876-1909* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1999).

⁶⁹⁴ In Turkish textbooks this is reflected in the Kemalist motto that "the Turks were the last people to break free" from the Ottoman shackles.

⁶⁹⁵ Karen Barkey & Mark von Hagen (eds.), *After Empire: Multiethnic Societies and Nation-Building* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1997).

government sought to free itself from the alleged domination of foreigners and ‘internal enemies’, aimed at Russifying the empire.⁶⁹⁶

Albeit not totally diametrically opposed to this paradigm, the statist paradigm emphasizes the imperial and strategic context, claiming that the CUP’s political agenda was dominated by retaining what was left of the Empire and regaining formerly lost territory. Therefore, the deportations were the CUP’s guarantee to have a Muslim demographic majority just in case they had to negotiate over territory after the war. By considering the problem from this angle, the ethnic campaigns can be seen as the result of calculated plans to obviate external meddling in Ottoman minority affairs by ‘abolishing’ the minorities. The deportations and massacres were thus borne out of the contingencies and exigencies of war and state security, and the CUP merely improvised and reacted to external and internal pressures.⁶⁹⁷ Most of its decisions and measures ran counter to a purely nationalist program and reveal a much more utilitarian approach, at times plain *Realpolitik*. According to the statist paradigm, the CUP dictators were by no means stalwart believers in ideologies of nationalism or racism.⁶⁹⁸

This study has attempted to challenge both of these paradigms by emphasizing that they are not mutually exclusive, nor that all of their differences are completely reconcilable. The paradigms have often developed out of multiple induction: by singling out CUP policy toward one aspect of Ottoman society or one ethnic group and theorizing from then on. When CUP leaders like Talât and Doctors Bahaeddin Şakir and Nâzım monopolized the future of the empire by applying their ideas, they not only expedited the political and social modernization of the Ottoman state, but also conditioned themselves to respond inventively to all future reactions. When İAMM/AMMU planners realized they bit off more than they could chew by ordering an other mass deportation in 1916, that of the Ottoman Kurds, they postponed the campaign in 1917 and left it to a later date to sort it out. Talât never lived to see the deportations of Kurds in the 1920s and 1930s, but the snowball had started rolling. Besides these arguments, it is also important to differentiate in the power structure of the CUP dictatorship. The totality of CUP internal policy suggests that it was driven both by short-term political steering, and by unshakable long-term convictions. The former, rational and calculated, often contradicted the latter, irrational (both in the economic and in the popular sense) and at times absurd. The Turkification of the Ottoman medical community is a good example of this apparent contradiction: at the same time the Interior Ministry began persecuting and liquidating Armenian doctors, the War Ministry was trying to cope with severe lack of medical staff for sick and wounded Ottoman soldiers at the

⁶⁹⁶ Eric Lohr, *Nationalizing the Russian Empire: The campaign against enemy aliens during World War I* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003).

⁶⁹⁷ Donald Bloxham, “The Armenian Genocide of 1915-1916: Cumulative Radicalization and the Development of a Destruction Policy,” in: *Past and Present*, no.181 (2003), pp.187-89.

⁶⁹⁸ Michael Reynolds, “Ottoman Strategic Objectives in World War I and the Myth of Panturanism,” paper presented at the conference *Ideologies of Revolution, Nation, and Empire: Political Ideas, Parties, and Practices at the End of the Ottoman Empire, 1878-1922*, Salzburg (Austria), 15-17 April 2005.

front. This example of a self-destructive crisis situation is not easily caught in either two paradigms. Part of the answer lays in the tension between Enver Paşa and Talât Paşa, who both had their own agendas: Enver most of all yearned to win the war, whereas Talât set out to turkify the country with all the coercive power he could muster. This leads us to the dynamics that center and periphery played in the events of the period.

Most of the deportations were micromanaged by Talât, others by his subordinate Ali Münif. One would need to take a much closer look at Talât's specific role and the nature of the power he exercised with respect to the persecution of the Ottoman Armenians, which accumulated to full genocidal proportions by the summer of 1915. Even with the extant primary documentation on the secretive nature of the bureaucratically organized destruction of the Armenians, one cannot keep from seeking to unearth the 'true' intention behind the thousands of telegraphic orders he issued, some of which are deceptive enough to fool the historian. Even so, all such inconsistencies notwithstanding, the sheer magnitude of the campaign doesn't leave a shred of doubt about the hostile intention of the policy.⁶⁹⁹ Talât's micro-managing qualities and cunning intelligence, coupled with calculating tact and extraordinary talent for political self-preservation need more research.⁷⁰⁰ Every other step in the radicalization of existing measures was spurred by Talât. Dr. Reşid's appointment was a vitalizing force underlying the existing program for mass destruction, not as a palliative.

It is inconceivable to understand the persecutions without highlighting the dynamics between national policy versus local agency. For this reason, Talât's relationship with governor Dr. Mehmed Reşid was a question central to this thesis. It is an example of the evolution of CUP policy against proclaimed 'internal enemies', notably the Armenians. When the persecution gained genocidal momentum, between 20 and 30 May 1915, it is likely that Talât wired the doctor-governor one or another euphemistic order to 'act ruthlessly'. He certainly did not grant Reşid *carte blanche* to eliminate all Christians, considering the future reprimands. The rabidly anti-Christian Ottoman patriot Dr. Reşid interpreted the order as a license to kill all Armenians and Syrians living under his jurisdiction. It is interesting to note that of all the Ottoman governors involved in the ethnic policies, none were rebuked for their cruelty and fanaticism like Reşid was – even if the persecutions ran more or less parallel in different provinces.⁷⁰¹ Therefore, Talât's telegraphic reprehensions unveil a secret in the definition of the scope of the persecutions. The reproof "*do not* destroy the other Christians" was basically synonymous to the speech act "*do*

⁶⁹⁹ Ton Zwaan, *Civilisering en decivilisering: studies over staatsvorming en geweld, nationalisme en vervolging* (Amsterdam: Boom, 2001), p.202.

⁷⁰⁰ Comparative perspectives with other dictators can both be a valuable tool in illuminating the power structure of the CUP, and provide benchmarks for assessing Talât's role in the persecutions. Cf.: Richard Overy, *The Dictators: Hitler's Germany, Stalin's Russia* (London: Allen Lane, 2004).

⁷⁰¹ Albeit on a much smaller scale, the example of SS Untersturmführer Max Täubner is somewhat similar to Dr. Reşid's story. Täubner was tried for conducting extremely cruel massacres of Jews in Russia, sentenced to a total of ten years imprisonment, expelled from the SS, and declared unfit for service. Yehoshua R. Büchler, "'Unworthy Behavior': The Case of SS Officer Max Täubner," in: *Holocaust and Genocide Studies*, vol.17, no.3 (2003), pp.409-29.

destroy the Armenians,” and reveals Talât’s tacit approval of Reşid’s anti-Armenian actions. Naturally, Talât formulated his argument without compromising himself in a written order.

The experiences of the various ethnic and religious groups in the province have largely been ignored in late Ottoman history. This study has also sought to counteract this negligence by directing attention to the experiences of other ethnic groups in the Ottoman Empire, focusing on Diyarbekir province, the *pièce de résistance* for CUP policies of Turkification. Diyarbekir was a hub in the maze of deportations of Armenians and Kurds, and saw some of the most brutal massacres in the summer of 1915. It becomes clear that in the massive destruction process during World War I, not all perpetrators were Turks and not all victims were Armenians. Certain Kurdish chieftains, Arabs and Circassians also joined in on the mass violence, whereas Yezidis, Syriacs, and Kurds were subjected to persecution as well. In fact, the first villages in Diyarbekir province to suffer wholesale massacres were the Syriac villages on Diyarbekir plain. Then again, certain Kurdish subtribes and several notable families were integrally deported to central and western parts of Anatolia, where a substantial part of them perished from lack of nutrition and contagious diseases. The maelstrom of violence, counterviolence, and multiple victimization arises out of a clear context.⁷⁰²

Contextualizing the deportations and massacres of the Ottoman Armenians with respect to other victim groups is important for understanding the bigger picture of CUP ethnic policies. At least on paper one could compare the broader CUP program of deportation and settlement, and the *Generalplan Ost*.⁷⁰³ In this analogy, the Armenian Genocide was ‘merely’ part of the general CUP plan of ‘internal colonization’ or ‘social engineering’, as the twisted road to genocide of the Jews in Nazi Germany was ‘merely’ part of the *Generalplan Ost*.⁷⁰⁴ Men like İAMM/AMMU director Şükrü Kaya in the Ottoman Empire and Adolf Eichmann in Nazi Germany were not only the supervisors of the deportation of Armenians and Jews, respectively, but were also responsible for the settlement of ethnic Turks and Germans, respectively. The ethnic deportations followed a clear nationalist logic as they geared into each other, pushing into a ‘total project’ toward the utopia of a country free from non-Turkish cultures and peoples.

⁷⁰² In the Ottoman border provinces that were occupied by the Russian army, many thousands of Muslims were massacred by Cossack and Armenian nationalist militias out of animosity and revenge. Mark Levene, “The Changing Face of Mass Murder: An Ottoman Case Study,” paper presented at the conference *Violences extrêmes*, Maison des Sciences de l’Homme (Paris), 29-30 November 2001, p.9. A sensible and dispassionate account, analysis, and contextualization of these acts of mass violence still awaits inquiry. At the time the historiography and memory of these instances of mass violence are mostly in the hands of discursive communities advocating Turkish-nationalist arguments. *Arşiv Belgelerine Göre Kafkaslar’da ve Anadolu’da Ermeni Mezâlimi* (Ankara: Devlet Arşivleri Genel Müdürlüğü Yayınları, 1995), 4 volumes. Therefore, case studies of provinces such as Bitlis, Erzurum, and Van are very much needed.

⁷⁰³ The *Generalplan Ost* was Nazi Germany’s grand utopia of the ethnic reorganization of Eastern Europe. It envisioned the physical extermination of all Jews and Gypsies, the Germanization and expulsion of some 50 million Slavs (Poles, Russians, Belorussians, Ukrainians, and others) over a period of two decades. German settlers would then colonize extensive tracts of Central and Eastern Europe, beginning in Poland. Czesław Madajczyk (ed.), *Vom Generalplan Ost zum Generalsiedlungsplan: Dokumente* (München: Saur, 1994); Mechthild Rössler, Sabine Schleiermacher & Robert Gellately (ed.), *Der ‘Generalplan Ost’: Hauptlinien der nationalsozialistischen Planungs- und Vernichtungspolitik* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1993); Bruno Wasser, *Himmlers Raumplanung im Osten: Der Generalplan Ost in Polen 1940-1944* (Berlin: Birkhäuser, 1993).

⁷⁰⁴ See also: Götz Aly & Susanne Heim, *Vordenker der Vernichtung: Auschwitz und die deutschen Pläne für eine neue europäische Ordnung* (Hamburg: Hoffmann und Campe, 1991), translated as: *Architects of Annihilation: Auschwitz and the Logic of Destruction* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2002).

The key notion in this interpretation is the presence of elements of *construction*, besides the obvious elements of *destruction* in CUP population policy. The elimination of the Armenian population left the state an infrastructure of Armenian property, which was used for the progress of Turkish settler communities. The Kurdish deportations too, were part of a plan to reconstruct the Kurds as Turks. The fate of the local elite of Diyarbakir attests to this two-track approach. There were two reasons why local beneficiaries of the genocide became local elites in the new, reborn national state.⁷⁰⁵ First, because they were supported by Mustafa Kemal on ideological and situational grounds. Second, because there was simply no other elite left. The pre-war Diyarbakir elite consisted of Christians and practically all of them had been killed. Until recently, researchers have only begun to scratch the surface of the elements of construction and destruction in the Ottoman provinces. It is known that Armenian traces on Diyarbakir culture were wiped out, even through its music.⁷⁰⁶ Armenian, Kurdish, and Syriac material and immaterial culture was appropriated by the Turkish government and re-used for its ends.⁷⁰⁷ The perpetrators and their families profited from the genocide. After 1923, entire generations in Diyarbakir were educated and provided for by the starting capital of Armenian property, acquired in 1915. The Pirinçizâde dynasty became even richer and are now one of the most influential families in Diyarbakir city.⁷⁰⁸ However, at the present time there is very little research on this transformative program of social engineering, let alone systematic comparative studies with Nazi or Soviet policies. These remarks are therefore tentative and only serve to point in a new direction and open new avenues of research.

A final comment about the consequences of the ethnic policies is in order. Once the CUP set about it in the one-way street into the direction of a nation state, it also adapted itself to the western-led global order of nation-states.⁷⁰⁹ That mass political violence and state terror had been utilized for this ends seemingly did not do Turkey much harm, according to the perpetrators. Retrospectively it even seemed that a Turkish nation state was inconceivable without the genocidal persecution and expulsion of the Christians, and the deportation, assimilation, and

⁷⁰⁵ Unlike in the collapse of many dictatorships, the Ottoman Empire seemingly never saw an empire-wide popular movement for a “day of reckoning” (*bijltjesdag*, ‘axe day’), to punish everybody who had collaborated with the criminal regime.

⁷⁰⁶ Hasmig Inejilkian, “‘Es Kisher...’: How Did the Song Survive?,” paper presented at the conference *UCLA International Conference Series on Historic Armenian Cities and Provinces: Tigranakert/Diarbekir and Edessa/Urfa*, University of California (Los Angeles), 13 November 1999.

⁷⁰⁷ For an analysis of this process in Urfa see: Kerem Öktem, “Incorporating the time and space of the ethnic ‘other’: nationalism and space in Southeast Turkey in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries,” in: *Nations and Nationalism*, vol.10, no.4 (2004), pp.559-78.

⁷⁰⁸ Aziz Feyzi became very rich in the genocide, acquiring both movable and immovable property. He had seven children, all of whom were highly educated. His son Ali Fethi Pirinçcioğlu was educated at Robert College in Istanbul and became correspondent for the semi-official newspaper *Cumhuriyet* in the 1940s. Interview with Aziz Feyzi’s granddaughter Yasemin Pirinçcioğlu, in: Cemal A. Kalyoncu, “Sultan Süleyman’ın torunu,” in: *Aksiyon* (24 Şubat 2001), p.325. Perhaps the most notorious massacrer of the province, Pirinçizâde Sıdkı, acquired a tremendous amount of wealth and could afford to send his son Cahit to Paris for advanced study. Sıdkı Jr. would then become one of the most read Turkish poets in the Republican era, Cahit Sıtkı Tarancı (1910-1956). For selected poems see: Cahit Sıdkı Tarancı, “Poetry,” in: *The Literary Review*, vol.5, no.1 (1961), p.86. Neither Ali Fethi Pirinçcioğlu, nor Cahit Sıdkı Tarancı ever reflected on the criminal nature of their father’s careers, as opposed to others such as Hans Frank’s son who bitterly condemned his father. Niklas Frank, *Der Vater: Eine Abrechnung* (München: Bertelsmann, 1987).

⁷⁰⁹ Mark Levene, *Genocide in the Age of the Nation State* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2005), 3 volumes.

settlement of the Muslims.⁷¹⁰ It was this very argument that was used by the perpetrators to justify their policies in the first place.

⁷¹⁰ Heather Rae, *State Identities and the Homogenisation of Peoples* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

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Tasvir-i Efkâr
The Times
Yeni Mecmua

Oral History

Interview with Aslan family (Zakhuran tribe), conducted in Kurdish Midyat (Mardin province) on 28 July 2004.

Interview with David Krikorian (aged 75) from Satk y village (Diyarbakir province), conducted in Turkish in Amsterdam on 16 December 2004.

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۵

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

الحمد لله الذي

ارسلنا محمدًا رسلنا
 صعب ، حاد ، ديار ، بركة ، طبره
 معززه ، قويه ، وديعه ، ابريه ، بركة ، قوه
 قويه ، ادره ، حبيب ، ربح ، قوه ، حايه
 ونفقه قويه رياسته

محمد
 ۲۹
 عم

اريد ان اقدم برفيق مفازي و اعمالي في ميسانه معطيه برافقه بجهه بودن معطيه تحت اسلم
 شركه دور و بوجه رسيدنه و معطيه و برفقه اسفاره و بجهه بودن و بجهه معطيه و بجهه
 ايجاري و معطيه و بجهه برفقه اسفاره و بجهه بودن و بجهه معطيه و بجهه

فاطر
 ۱۲

Translation

coded telegram

Sublime Porte

Ministry of Interior

Directorate for the Settlement of Tribes and Immigrants

Department for Settlement

General: 219

To the chairmanships of the assortment commissions of

the provinces of Urfa, Adana, Ankara, Erzurum, Bitlis, Haleb, Hüdavendigâr, Diyarbekir, Sivas, Trabzon, Mamuret-ul Aziz, Konya,

the districts of İzmit, Eskişehir, Niğde, Kastamonu, Kayseri, Urfa, Aynteb, Maraş, Karesi, Canik.

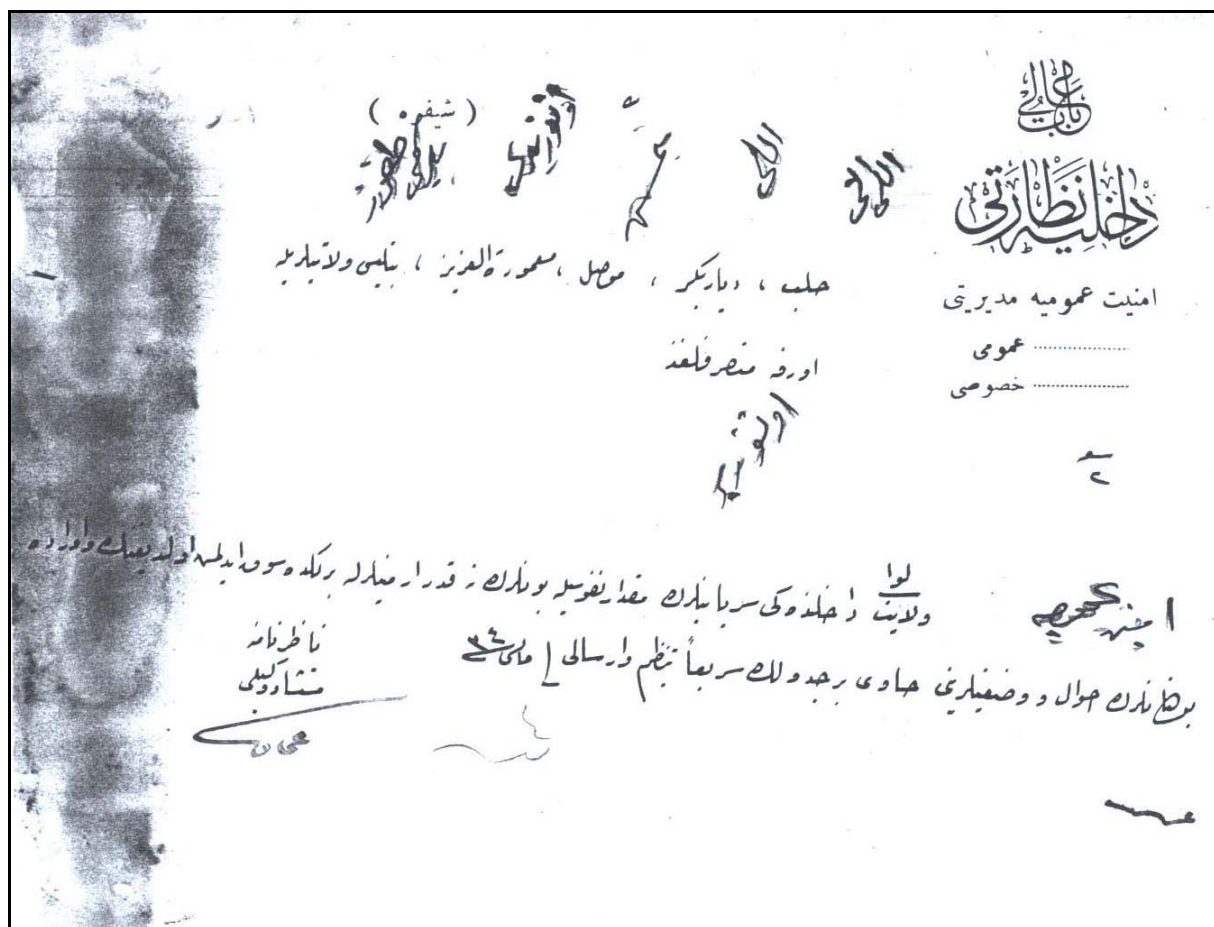
In order to preclude that establishments such as factories and stores and workshops left by the Armenians are left unoccupied they should be transferred to Muslim establishments under suitable circumstances, and it has already been reported that facilities and support will be given for this cause. These should be rented to Muslim aspirants and required support should be given.
16 May 1916.

minister

Talât

Explanation

The Turkification or nationalization of the Ottoman economy was one of the main components of wartime CUP policies. All foreign-owned enterprises needed to be taken over by Muslims, willingly or unwillingly. The genocidal persecution of the Armenians facilitated the government-sponsored confiscation of entire branches of professions previously dominated by Armenians. Having destroyed the Armenians, their economic infrastructure was thrown open for exploitation by CUP loyalists. In this telegram Talât officially ordered a nation-wide decree for transferring previously Armenian-owned establishments to Muslims. The telegram was also sent to Diyarbekir, where Tîrpandjian's silk factory was confiscated by Müftüzâde Hüseyin.



Translation

coded telegram

Sublime Porte
Ministry of Interior
Directorate for General Security


To the provinces of Haleb, Diyarbekir, Musul, Mamuret-ul Aziz, Bitlis,
to the district of Urfa.

The immediate arrangement and dispatch of a report on the condition of the number of Syrians
in the province/district and how many of them have been deported together with the Armenians.
4 May 1918.

in name of the Minister,
assistant clerk
Ali Münif

Explanation

This telegram is one of the few instances in which the Ottoman government at the most central level was specifically interested in the Syrians. Talât seems to have delegated the task of surveilling the Syrians to his direct subordinate Ali Münif. From 1917 on they were even allowed to travel freely through the empire for commercial ends. It seems that the CUP leadership did not perceive the Syrians as a threat, probably because the latter consisted mostly of politically unorganized peasants and artisans. Their religious leadership obeyed the government and avoided any conflict of interest at all costs. Since there were no Syriac-nationalist equivalents of the Dashnak and Henschak parties, the Syriac population was perceived as sufficiently emasculated by the CUP.



دولت نظامی

(شيفره)

ادرنه	ولايتنه	سيواس	ولايتنه	غير تصرفلنه
لوزيوم	»	طرزون	»	قره سي
آطنه	»	قسطنطيني	»	قسطنطيني
آنقره	»	قونية	»	قلعه سلطانيه
آيدين	»	معموره العزيز	»	منتشا
بتليس	»	موصل	»	تکه
بصره	»	ولان	»	قيصري
بنجله	»	بين	»	قره حصار صاحب
بيروت	»	اورفه	متصرفلغه	اسکيشهر
جزيره	»	ايزميت	»	ايچايل
حلب	»	بولي	»	کوناھيه
خداوندکار	»	جانک	»	مرعش
دياربکر	»	چتالجه	»	نيکده
سوريه	»	زور	»	جند شوره مانظلنه

مجله ليله نرفتنه

امنيت عموميه مديريت

شعبه

عمومي

خصوصي

فایده مندی

تاریخ

شماره

بوزار وزیر اعظم

وافتخار اليوم موجود اولان ارشدنده افسانده اينک امری دنارنج و مورد افسانده اولدغانلارنده

ارمنی و یسوعانده خرابی درجه سی و افسانده بری نه اشد استقال ایدقدنر و افسانده اول و عده احوال

و جانده ضابطه مبدی نه موزنه و تفتیش دایر مفصل بره بدول تنظیمه مقرر و رعیت ممکنه اید ارسال اید تجمیع توفیر و غیر

۴۴۴

۱۵

تاریخ

Translation

coded telegram

Sublime Porte

Ministry of Interior

Directorate for General Security

To all provinces

It is requested with special importance that a detailed report is prepared and in any possible way sent on the names and dates and manner of conversion and names of the family members and familial relations to the head of the family of those converted Armenians currently in the province/district and what kind work they have been doing and their condition and movement before and after conversion and how they are known in the locality. 3 April 1918.

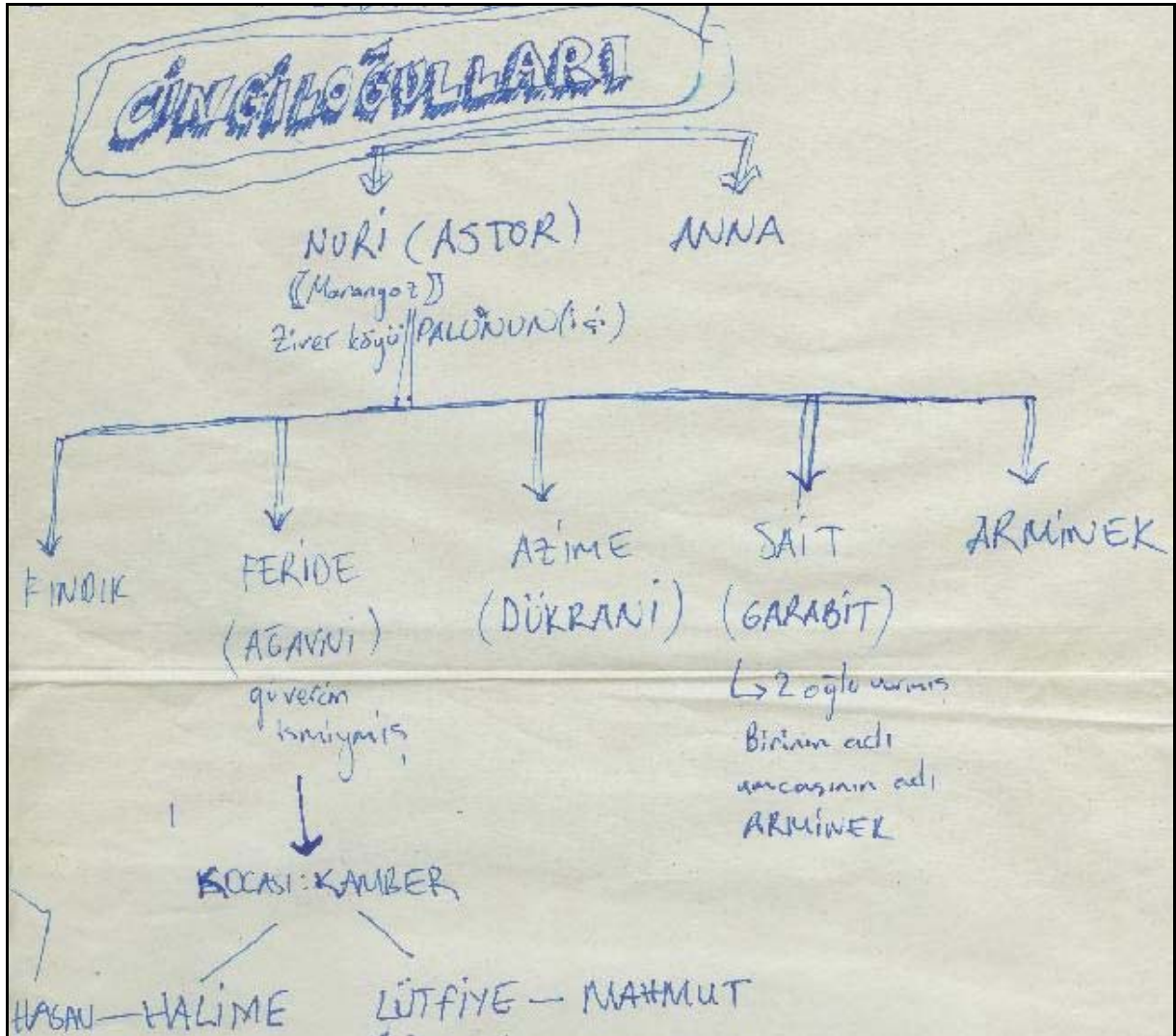
minister

Talât

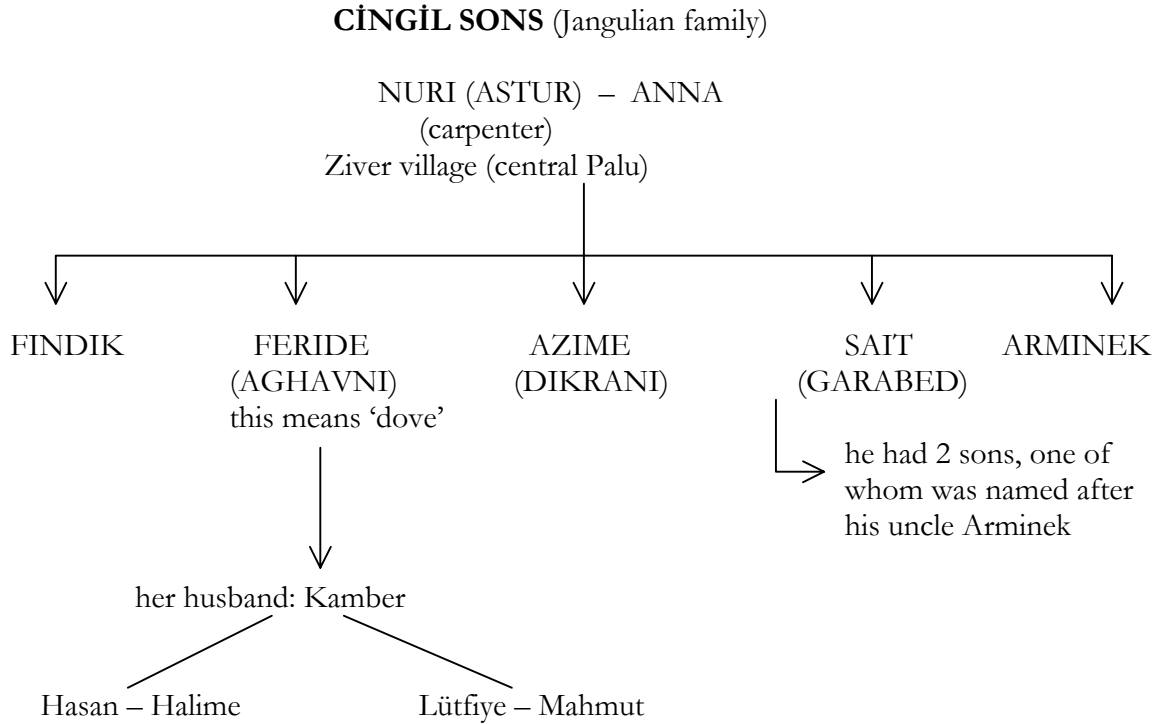
Explanation

As the war is drawing nearer to an end, Talât shows special interest in the fates of the Armenian converts and orders them surveilled by local intelligence officers. The fact that he requests very precise information from all over the Empire exemplifies his micro-managing qualities. However, very little research has been conducted on (forced) conversion during and after the genocide. Important issues such as factual descriptions of the experiences of the converts, provincial and local differentiation in their experiences, their relationship with their Muslim neighbours and the government, and persecution and discrimination in their afterlives still lay unanswered.

Appendix 4: Family tree of Y.A.



Translation

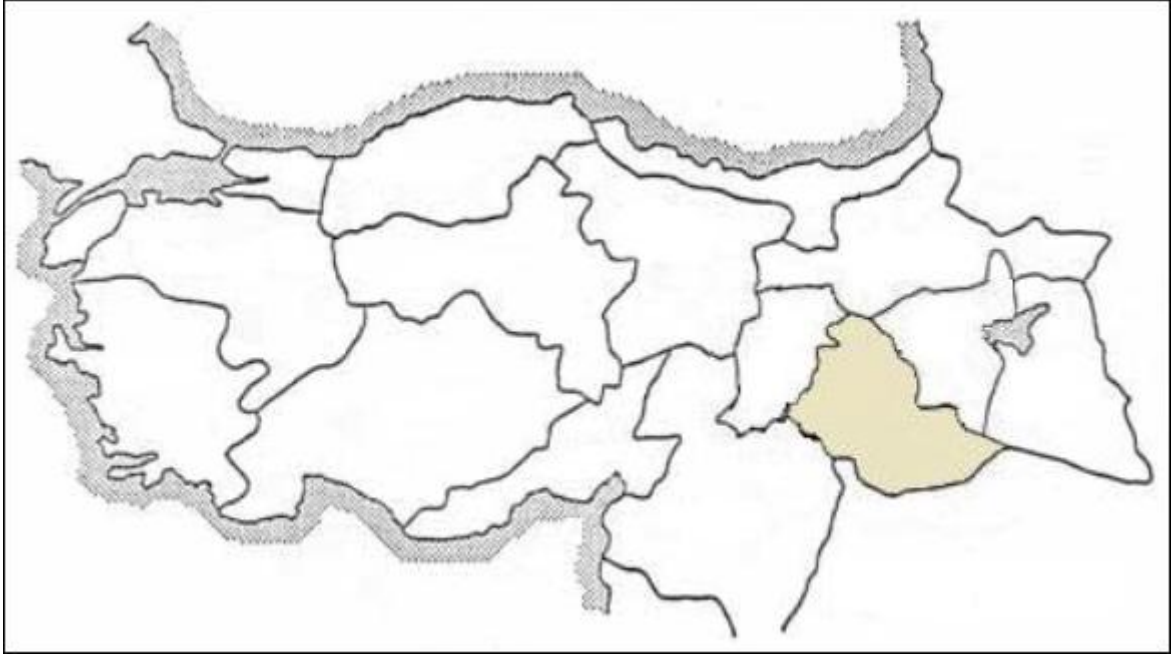


Explanation

This document shows the family tree of the Jangulians from Palu. It was written down by Lütfiye and Mahmut's son Y.A. in the 1980s. When Y. set out to research his family history he found out that some of his ancestors bore two names: one Muslim name, and one Armenian name. They survived the genocide by converting to Islam and seeking asylum among a Zaza family, with whom they intermarried. At that time Y. realized he was part Armenian. He is now interviewing his grandmother Feride (Aghavni) and writing a detailed family history. The family tree clearly shows converted Armenians as ancestors: Astor converted to Nuri, Aghavni to Feride, Dikrani to Azime, and Garabed to Sait. It is only one example of the hundreds of families that attempted to stay alive by converting to Islam and seeking asylum among Muslim acquaintances. Very little research has been conducted on their fates. Y. is now 32, married, and works and lives in Elazığ. Out of privacy reasons his name was undisclosed.

Maps

Map 1: Diyarbekir province in the Ottoman Empire



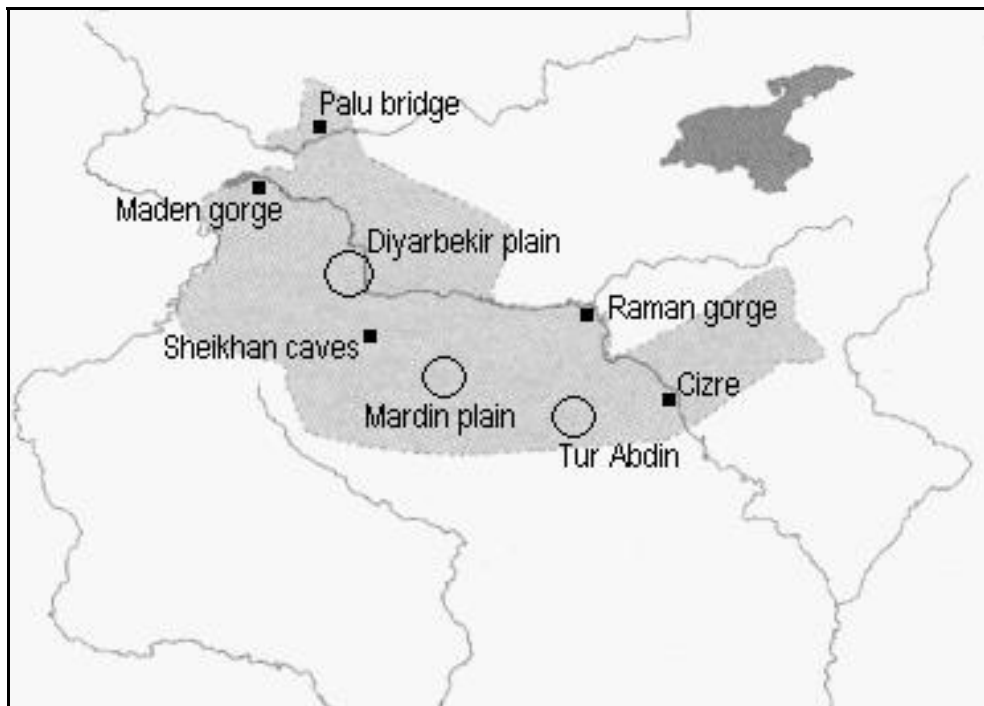
Map 2: Diyarbekir province and its towns



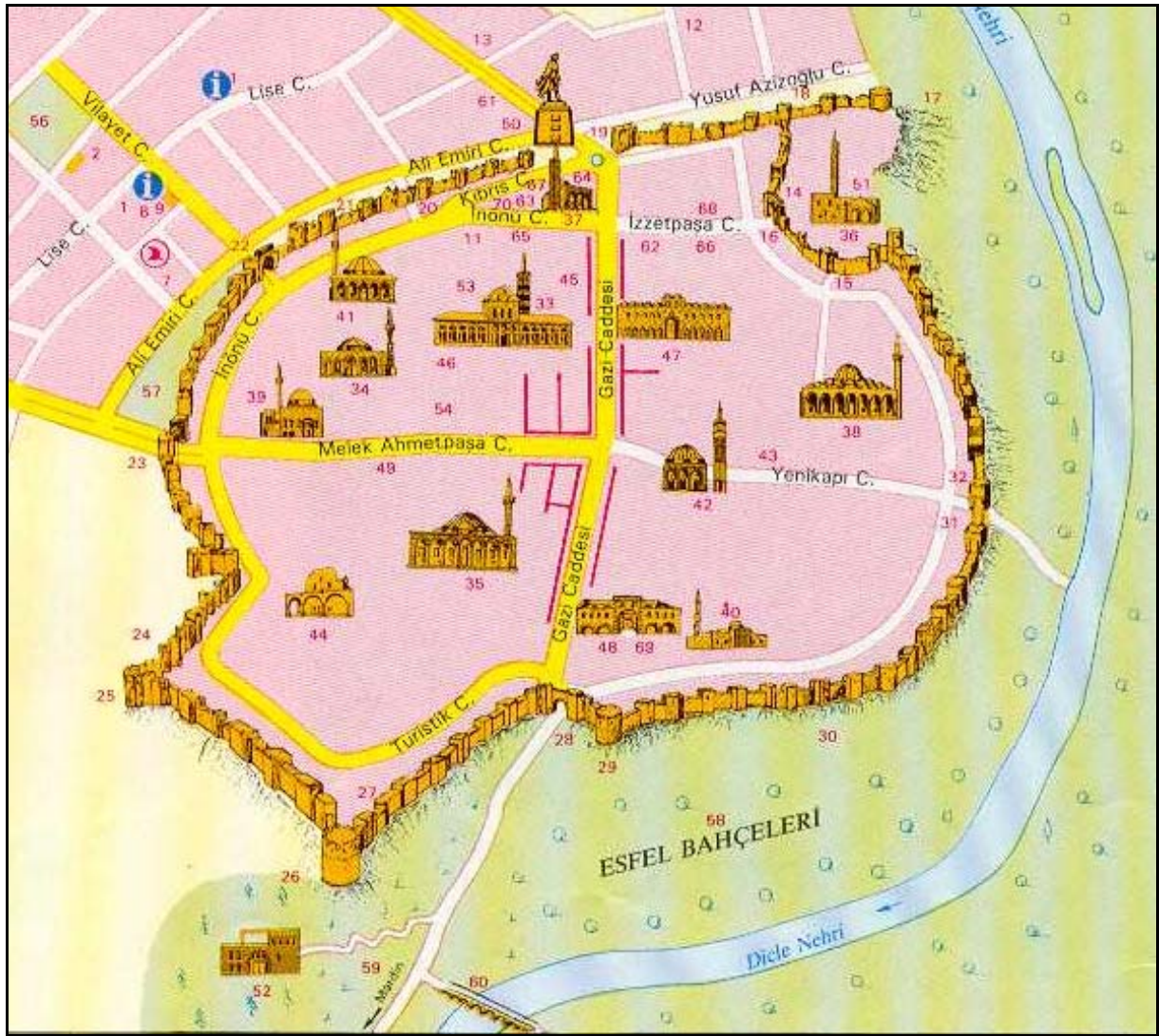
Map 3: Diyarbekir province and some of its Kurdish tribes



Map 4: Diyarbekir province: some major massacre sites



Map 5: Diyarbekir city plan



- no.39: Melek Ahmed Mosque
- no.44: Syrian-Orthodox Mother Mary Church
- no.46: Sincariye seminary
- no.48 & 69: Caravanserai-prison, later Kervansaray Hotel
- no.53: Cahit Sıdkı Tarancı Museum
- no.54: Ziyâ Gökâlp Museum